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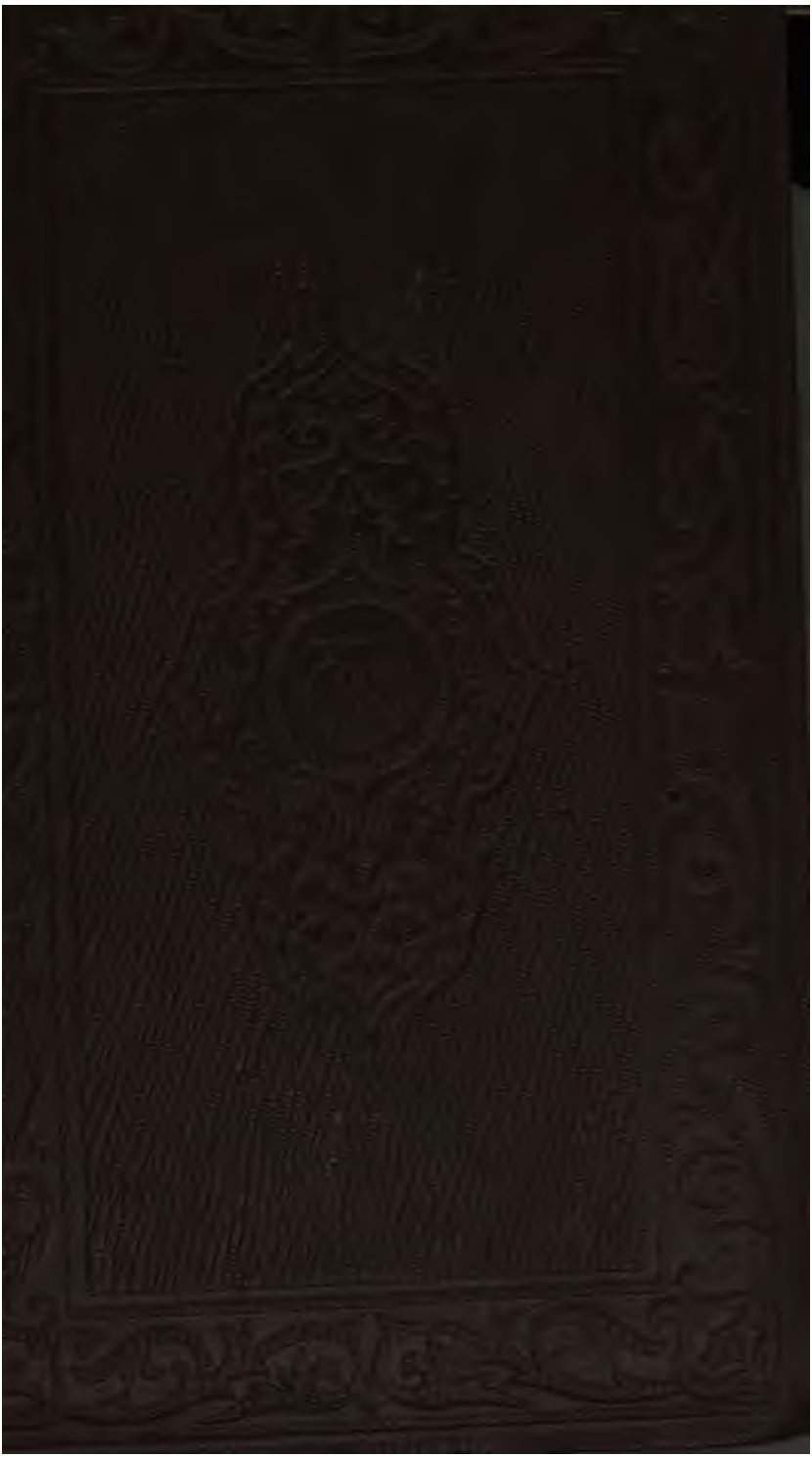

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THE CAMPBELLS.

A NOVEL.

"I would not champ the hard cold bit
——— of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God's freedom—using it."

E. B. BROWNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London:
T. CAUTLEY NEWBY, PUBLISHER,
30, WELBECK STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.
1859.

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249. w. 438.

BODLEIANA
BIBLIOTHECA

THE CAMPBELLS.

CHAPTER I.

At a quarter before twelve a.m., on the third of June, 184—, a cab drove up to the London terminus of the Little East Western, and deposited a young man, a hat box, a carpet bag, and a portmanteau. The driver received his fare with a doubtful expression of countenance, and cast a hasty glance at the payer of the same. His knowledge of physiognomy, however, was equal to the occasion; not feeling encouraged to make any further demand, he flipped the half-

crown into the air, caught it again, put into his pocket, and disappeared simultaneously from the station of the Little East Western, and these pages. Not even his number has been preserved.

The young man who produced this unfavourable impression on the cabman's mind, was apparently of about two and twenty years of age, and somewhat under the middle stature. He was not exactly handsome: the features were too strongly marked for that; but the general character of the face was such as to convey the idea of power, and at the same time to inspire an instinctive feeling of confidence in its possessor. If the reader wishes to learn his name and present destination, he has only to follow the porter who is carrying his luggage to the train. He will then be able to read the following address on the portmanteau.

Henry Egerton, Esq.,
Rev. Edward Campbell,
Stonecombe,
Near B——.

Having expanded his coats and plaids, &c. in a manner to engage two places in an empty coupé, our traveller proceeded to the front of the station, and anxiously watched each carriage as it arrived.

"I wonder what can make Campbell so late," he muttered to himself; "he is generally a very punctual man, and the train will start in five minutes. It will be rather awkward to introduce myself to the Vicar as his son's visitor, and add that I have left his son in London. Sooner than that, I must wait for the next train. I wish I had not taken my ticket; it will be very provoking if we cannot go to-day, for I am rather anxious to see my fair maid of Stonecombe again. Already five minutes to three and no signs of him! Ah! here he comes or I am much mistaken."

At this moment a cab dashed up to the station, and a young man sprang out of it. He appeared about the same age as his friend, but was rather taller, and less robust in frame. His features were regular and singularly delicate; and although

it would have been incorrect to designate the face as weak, yet its most striking characteristics were those of refinement and sensibility rather than of strength.

"I am very sorry to be so late, Egerton," he exclaimed; "I hope my unpunctuality has not caused us to miss the train; am I in time?"

"Just in time, but not a minute to spare," cried Egerton. "Here, this way, I'll carry that. Get a ticket as quick as you can, while I look after your luggage."

"I had some commissions to execute for my father, which detained me longer than I expected. I am very sorry to have kept you waiting."

"No apologies," replied Egerton, "all's well that ends well; but make haste, or it will *not* end well."

After the usual amount of bustle and confusion—nervous travellers rushing about in a state of distressing mental excitement about their luggage—and porters exclaiming, "by your leave," while wheeling the said luggage over the toes of

its proprietors—the whistle was at length heard, and the train got fairly under weigh. Egerton and Herbert found the coupé still unoccupied, which they much preferred, as it enabled them to enjoy their conversation without interruption.

"So we are rolling out of London again, almost as soon as we have entered it," exclaimed Egerton. "I never leave the old place without a sigh; I love it dearly."

"What is it in the big Babel that has such charms for you? Is it the society, or the theatres, or the eternal din?"

"I like both the society and the theatres, but I love it principally just because it is a big Babel."

"And I hate it for that very reason," replied Herbert; "besides, it is a cold, worldly, money-getting, prosaic place at the best. I like Stonecombe, with its beautiful scenery, a hundred times better."

Egerton smiled. "It is curious how differently the same place strikes different persons. I have

nothing to say against the beauties of Stonecombe, and shall probably be as enthusiastic about them as yourself before I am many days older. But as to London being prosaic! Why it has more poetry about it than almost any other place in the world."

"Ah, I suppose you mean its historical associations, the Tower, and Smithfield, and—"

"No, I was not thinking of them. I mean London as it is at this moment. Why even the prosaic in London is on such a colossal scale as to become poetical by its mere magnitude. Has it never occurred to you, that there is perhaps no other spot in the whole solar system, where two millions and a half of reasoning animals are collected together?"

"Size and number are no elements of poetry," repled Herbert.

"I rather doubt that. At any rate it is a doctrine which would make sad work with many parts of 'Paradise Lost,' to say nothing of 'Xerxes' Army,' or the 'Milky Way.' But putting all such considerations aside, it is not

merely the number of lives in London, but the intensity of life, which makes it interesting."

"I prefer Stonecombe," said Herbert smiling. "But as you like London so much, it is really a pity we did not stay there longer. How delightful it would have been to have spent a couple of days in riding about on the top of an omnibus, feeding our youthful imaginations with the elevating spectacle of crowds of cabs and cockneys."

"You certainly have a fine sense for the prose of London," said Egerton, "if you have not for its poetry. But seriously, I had nothing to keep me; and a week at the sea, and among the rocks of Stonecombe, offers much greater temptations to me at present. Besides, I am very anxious to make the acquaintance of your father."

"Then I hope, my dear fellow, you do not mean to be so shabby as to cut us off with a week. I reckon upon a month at least, and so does my father. He will think that his first sermon has frightened you away, and that you will not risk a second Sunday. No, no, I

cannot let you off with less than a month at least."

"It is very kind of you to say so," replied Egerton, "but as I am going to read with Cramwell at the Lakes, and join his party in July, I have but a month's leisure altogether, and of this I must spend at least a fortnight at Hebworth, or my father might feel hurt. Besides which I have particular reasons for wishing to be with him as soon as possible."

"Indeed, I hope you have had no bad news of Sir Roderick?"

"Not *of* him, but *from* him. In a letter I received yesterday he mentions that he has had unfavourable accounts from Italy. I think I must have told you that my elder brother William has spent the greater part of the last three years in the south of Europe for his health."

"He is not worse, I hope?"

"I fear so. What has most alarmed my father is a letter he received last week from a Mr. Robertson, my brother's companion. He says indeed that danger is not immediate, but the

desire of the writer not to alarm us prematurely, and at the same time to prepare us for the worst, is painfully evident throughout the whole of it. If I had my own will I should start for Italy at once. But my father attaches so much importance to the degree I am to take next January, and has expressed himself so strongly on the subject, that I have no choice."

"It is very natural that you should wish to be with your brother at such a time; but I cannot say that I am much surprised at your father's not liking you to sacrifice your prospects at the University."

"I can understand his feelings well enough," replied Egerton, "but I cannot quite sympathize with them. For all the practical purposes of after life, I have studied at the University long enough; and as far as the degree is concerned, even granting I take a good one,—what is it after all?"

"The road to a fellowship," replied Herbert.

"Which I shall probably forfeit by marriage, before I have pocketed the first year's income."

"Marry! I had no idea you contemplated anything so serious. And may I ask who the fair lady is?"

"I was speaking of marriage generally," said Egerton, "without thinking of any young lady in particular. I believe," continued he, smiling, after a short pause, "I believe I must in simple honesty retract that last statement. I certainly had a fair vision in my mind's eye; only—"

"Only what?" asked Herbert much interrested.

"Only that I am not regularly in love with her as yet."

"And who is she?"

"A young lady whom I met about three times at London parties last winter."

"Pretty?"

"Very pretty."

"Dark or fair?"

"Rather fair; but what interested me far more than her beauty, was the great interest she seemed to take in a class of subjects

which do not generally engage young ladies' attention; at least, not very deeply."

"What were they?"

"Ragged schools, visiting societies, *et hoc genus omne.*"

"Depend upon it, Egerton, that's the right sort of woman for you. And did the lady seem propitious?"

"Well, I hardly know. At any rate she seemed a good deal interested in our conversation; but I saw too little of her to judge what my chance might be. Still, on the whole I do not think I need despair."

"Of course not," said Herbert warmly, "from what I know of your character, I believe you to be the man of all others to interest such a girl as you have described. Go on and prosper, man. You have my best wishes; but you have not yet told me her name. Or is that a secret at present?"

Egerton remained silent for a few moments, at length he replied:

"Having given you a part of my confidence,

Campbell, I may as well give you the rest; I feel the more inclined to do so, because you may have it in your power to aid me if you will. The lady in question is a fair cousin of yours."

Herbert turned deadly pale.

"The name, Egerton, the name," he repeated huskily.

"Mary Campbell."

Herbert looked out of the window and remained silent; but the nervous twitching of his fingers did not indicate any lack of interest in the subject of conversation.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Egerton, after a short pause; "what a dolt I have been in this business to be sure. To think that that never occurred to me before."

The roseate hue of his fortnight's visit to Stonecombe, was rapidly fading into a very pale grey.

"Well, Campbell," he continued at length, "I have been foolish enough to blab out confidence which I ought to have kept to myself; but the thing is done now, and cannot be helped. I shall

always regret the unlucky turn which the conversation—"

"No, Egerton," said Herbert, interrupting him, "there is no reason for regret. I assure you it is the best thing that could have happened for both of us. You have given me *your* confidence, and I will now return it with *mine*. I have been attached to my cousin from the time that we played together as children. And what is still more to the purpose," he continued, with the slightest possible expression of defiance in his tone, "she has been no less attached to me. Indeed, there is a tacit engagement between us. It is much better you should know this at once; for you may take my word for it, you have been deceiving yourself most egregiously."

"In what respect?" asked Egerton, a little annoyed at Herbert's last expression.

"In imagining that she took any personal interest in yourself."

"But, my dear Campbell, I never imagined anything of the kind."

"Then why did you say so?"

"I never *did* say so. I said that she appeared to take considerable interest in our conversation, or something to that effect, and that I thought I need not despair. But I told you at the beginning of our conversation—no, please do not interrupt me—that I was not in love with her as yet; and it would be a most absurd piece of coxcombry if I thought I had already made an impression on *her* heart, before she had made one on *mine*."

"Tell me one thing, Egerton. Was not the expectation of seeing my cousin at Stonecombe the most powerful inducement to you, when you accepted my invitation?"

"Certainly, it was. I allow it. I will say more. I still look forward to seeing her with very great pleasure; but after your communication, it will be as your future wife, rather than for her own sake. Will not that satisfy you?"

"Of course, of course," said Herbert hastily. "There is one thing however, which I cannot quite comprehend."

"And what is that?"

"I cannot conceive how any man should have such perfect control over his feelings as to be able to give up all personal interest in a woman at a moment's notice. There must be some fundamental difference in our characters, for I certainly could not have done it myself."

"It seems to me," replied Egerton, "that you do not sufficiently consider the very wide difference between the admiration which may lead to love, and the love itself. I had only reached the first stage. I had said to myself, that if we were to fall in love with each other, and I were to marry her, she would make me a most excellent wife. Now that I know this to be out of the question, there is no more danger of my indulging in any warmer feeling for her, than if she were already married."

Herbert remained silent for a few minutes. At length he said, "I am quite satisfied, Egerton. There is my hand upon it. And now let us change the subject."

Taken at the best, the situation was rather an awkward one. Both felt it to be so, and the

conversation flagged. Herbert Campbell had the most implicit faith in Egerton's honour, and his cousin's attachment to himself. But almost all his intercourse with the latter had been confined to the country. He had never seen her at London parties, and little knew how often she had been regarded as the belle of the evening. The very idea therefore, that her beauty had been gazed on with a degree of admiration verging on love, and that she had listened with deep interest to the conversation of another man, appeared to him almost like a species of desecration. As far as his feelings were concerned, it was a new discovery, and by no means an agreeable one.

Egerton also felt vexed, but quite as much so with himself as with the new aspect which his visit to Stonecombe had assumed within the preceding few minutes. His admiration for Mary Campbell had not assumed sufficient proportions to be ripe for a confidence even to a friend, and yet the accidental turn of the conversation had induced him to make one. Had he waited till he had arrived at Stonecombe,

he would soon have seen the real state of the case, and the disagreeable éclaircissement would have been avoided. In short he felt that he had acted rather weakly—a painful conviction for a man of any strength of character.

CHAPTER II.

At length the train halted.

"Here we are at T——," said Herbert, "the last station before B—— where we leave the rail. Ah! there is Mr. Walker, the attorney at Stonecombe. I hope he has not seen me. How provoking! He has just bowed. Good morning, Mr. Walker."

"Is there room in your carriage, Mr. Campbell?" said that gentleman.

"Oh, yes," replied Herbert. "Will you get in?"

The individual thus addressed was a rather

overdressed young man of about eight-and-twenty. He had been walking along the platform apparently looking for a place, and gladly accepted Herbert's invitation.

"Well, I'm in luck to-day," said Mr. Walker, while arranging his coats and bag. "I have just had a long *tête-à-tête* in the coach with a pretty little governess, and as soon as I reach the station I meet an old friend."

Herbert introduced Mr. Walker to Egerton, who returned that gentleman's bow rather stiffly.

"You are going on to Stonecombe, I suppose?" said Mr. Walker.

Herbert replied in the affirmative.

"Then perhaps we can go on from B—— together. I had intended to take a gig, but shall be glad to save the cash. Do you expect any one to meet you?"

"I rather think that my father will drive over in the phaeton."

"That will be capital," said Mr. Walker, "for it will easily hold four; and my traps are a mere nothing and as light as a feather."

"I am afraid," said Herbert, somewhat surprised at Mr. Walker's coolness, "that our own luggage will make it impossible for us to enjoy the pleasure of your company."

"Ah well, we shall see when we get there. I've been a good deal at the Hall lately, and am going there to-day. In fact I have just been to see a party about a little business of your uncle's. I've a great respect for your uncle, Mr. Campbell—a very great respect. He's a regular trump, Sir, a regular trump. Not but what I have as great a respect for your father too; but then I see much more of Mr. Campbell."

"Is this place B——," said Egerton, as the train stopped.

"Yes, Sir, this is B——," said Mr. Walker, answering for Herbert. "Now let us look out for the phaeton. Hang it though, it's not there! A gig will cost me ten and six. Hurrah! there's the Oakwood livery, and there's the carriage! Then there's room for me and no mistake."

While they were getting their luggage, his uncle's servant came up to Herbert, and told

him the Vicar had not been able to send the phaeton, as he had wanted it himself that afternoon, but that the Miss Campbells had driven over to B—— to do some shopping, and had offered to bring Herbert and his friend back to Stonecombe.

"Hum," said, or rather coughed Mr. Walker, "then one of us can go on the box. Will you take the box Mr., ehem, I beg your pardon, Sir, but I did not quite catch your name before."

"Egerton, sir," was the somewhat stern reply.

"Egerton! Why bless my soul! Excuse me, but are you any relation of Sir Roderick Egerton, of Hebworth Abbey?"

"Sir Roberick Egerton is my father."

Mr. Walker's manner underwent an immediate change, and the question of the box-seat was dropped.

Egerton accompanied Herbert to the carriage and was introduced to Miss Campbell, whom he had never seen before.

He then spoke to Mary Campbell, and alluded to their former acquaintance, but with a slight

shade of embarrassment in his manner, which was principally occasioned by the consciousness that Herbert was listening with a rather unnecessary degree of attention to every word he said.

The sisters were very glad to see their cousin and would perhaps have expressed their pleasure more openly, had not the presence of others, combined with a little nervous excitement on the part of Herbert, thrown a slight awkwardness over the meeting. Under these circumstances, it was only natural that Egerton should feel himself rather *de trop*. Not wishing to act as a restraint upon such near relatives, he withdrew a few paces from the rest of the party, and busied himself with ascertaining that the proper number of bags and boxes had duly arrived.

Mary soon perceived his object, and being anxious that Herbert's friend should not feel himself neglected, immediately addressed him in such a manner as to make his joining in the conversation a matter of necessity.

Mr. Walker, in the mean time, was so far from considering himself *de trop*, that he pushed for-

wards, and shook hands with the ladies in a manner that was intended to be very easy, but was only vulgarly familiar.

Egerton and Herbert took the seats opposite the ladies, and Mr. Walker mounted the box as if he were quite at home, and to ask permission would have been a useless piece of affectation. The footman, who had been engaged in putting the luggage into a dog cart, now returned, and to his great dismay, found his place already occupied.

Mr. Walker was looking with great energy at the clouds in an opposite direction, and was evidently so engrossed with his meteorological observations, as not to perceive tall Thomas's embarrassment. Egerton was the only person in the carriage who saw what was going on, but being an entire stranger he could take no step beyond that of calling Herbert's attention to Mr. Walker's usurpation.

"I am afraid, Mr. Walker," said Herbert, "we must beg you to take a seat in the dog cart, as the box is required for Thomas."

Mr. Walker, thus addressed, turned to the speaker in a somewhat insolent manner, and was evidently on the point of making a rude answer. His eye, however, accidentally caught Miss Campbell's, and for some inexplicable reason, he appeared to think it more advisable to beat a retreat.

As he was descending from his lofty elevation there was a litttle smile about her mouth, which, though hardly perceptible, did not escape his observation, and increased his discomfiture.

"Shall I take the upper or lower road, ma'am?" said the coachman touching his hat to Miss Campbell.

"What do you say, Herbert? The upper is the shortest, but then the lower is the prettiest, and if Mr. Egerton does not know the neighbourhood—"

"There can be no question," said Mr. Walker from the dog cart, "that the upper is decidedly the better road."

"I hope you will not lengthen your drive merely on my account," said Egerton.

"Half an hour or so can make no difference," said Herbert; "we have plenty of time before dinner."

"Suppose then we take the lower road," said Miss Campbell, "and introduce Mr. Egerton to some of the beauties of Stonecombe. We are rather proud of our scenery, Mr. Egerton, and always wish the first impression to be a favorable one, for it is generally the strongest and most lasting."

Egerton thought that he had already been introduced to some of the beauties of Stonecombe, and that the first impression had been a very favorable one indeed. His former acquaintance, Mary Campbell, was a very pretty girl, but if his conversation with her had not turned upon the particular subjects which interested both of them so deeply, her face would probably have made no more powerful impression on him than many another fair vision from the book of beauty; but the case was far different with her eldest sister. There was a certain family resemblance in the form of the features, but Miss Campbell's beauty seemed

to him of quite another order, and to speak of things lying far beyond the scope of her younger sister's nature.

He had only seen her for a few minutes, and the half dozen sentences he had exchanged with her were naturally confined to the most indifferent topics. And yet he felt a faith in what remained behind, which whole hours of conversation with her younger sister had failed to produce. In short, he confessed to himself that the slight interest he had felt in Mary Campbell, had been but the prologue to the imperial theme, and that he had never seen a face so beautiful as the one before him, or one so expressive of noble thought, and deep womanly feeling.

The first effect produced by arriving at a conclusion of this sort, is widely different in different individuals. In Egerton it was a partial stupefaction; he became for the moment perfectly indifferent to the beauty of the scenery, in fact, he was hardly conscious of the presence of any external objects, but one, and paid no attention to

the conversation that was carried on between Herbert and Mary.

He felt very little desire to hear Miss Campbell speak, for no words she was likely to utter could have for him the eloquence of her calm, deep eyes in the repose of silence. Still less did he wish to speak himself; he only wished to be allowed to gaze unregarded. Good manners, however, forbade this, and he forced himself to throw out a few common-place remarks on the objects that presented themselves on the way. The idea of attempting to make himself agreeable to her never occurred to him; he was far too much engrossed with the single consciousness of the presence of surpassing beauty, to think of himself in any way, or to be able to collect his thoughts for a sustained conversation.

To Miss Campbell he must have appeared very reserved; or perhaps she imagined he was fatigued by the journey. At any rate she left him to the undisturbed enjoyment of his reverie, and only joined occasionally in the conversation between her sister and Herbert.

The latter had been listening with great interest to Mary's animated account of all her protegées at Stonecombe, and the various events that had occurred in his absence. Suddenly he interrupted her with the exclamation, "why there is Pilgrim's Point already! I had not thought we were so far. It is a glorious afternoon; what do you say to our walking up to it, and enjoying the view? We shall still be home in time for dinner."

"I think it would be very delightful," said Mary. "Have you any objection, Bertha?"

"I think Mr. Egerton must be tired with his journey; and besides, we ought not to show him everything the first day."

Egerton assured the ladies that he was not the least tired, but should enjoy a scramble up the hills extremely. Upon this the party alighted and commenced the ascent.

CHAPTER III.

THE path was very steep, and in many places hardly deserved the name. It was occasionally interrupted by a sort of rough staircase, partly hewn in the rock, and partly built up of rough loose stones, so irregular in form that they bore a greater resemblance to the bed of a mountain torrent than to anything constructed with design. Herbert and Mary took the lead, and Egerton and Miss Campbell brought up the rear. Their progress resembled climbing rather than walking, but Herbert's hand was always ready, and Mary surmounted her difficulties without any

great alarm. On two occasions Egerton offered his assistance to Miss Campbell, but it was politely declined.

"From living in this rocky country," said Miss Campbell, "I am accustomed to climbing such places. My sister is more timid than I am, and therefore not quite so independent."

After continuing the ascent for a few minutes longer, they arrived at a part of the path, where some twenty or thirty high and narrow stairs, or rather ledges, were succeeded by a smooth and very steep inclined plane of rock. Herbert and Mary had already passed it. Egerton followed, but stopped at the top of the steps to see that Miss Campbell ascended them in safety. When she had reached the bottom of the inclined plane, and saw that the least slip on its smooth and steep surface must inevitably precipitate her to the bottom of the steps—a fall of about fifteen to twenty feet—she paused for an instant. This time Egerton's offer of assistance was no longer a mere offer, it was a command. There was nothing in the words he used; he simply told

her in a low, but clear and decided tone, to take his hand; but there was something in the manner which seemed to deprive her of all power of resistance, and she obeyed like a child. After this, there was no more talk about independence; but wherever the path was steep or difficult, Egerton's hand was as readily offered and as quickly taken, as if Stonecombe and its neighbourhood had never supplied any opportunities for young ladies to practise climbing.

This little incident, trifling as it was in itself, seemed to break the spell that had rested on Egerton ever since they had left the station. Up to this time he had felt subdued by somewhat of the same sort of feeling of oppression that a countryman may experience on entering the presence of Royalty. By a slight assertion of superiority in physical strength and courage, but still more in the decision requisite to their use, he had turned the scale in his own favour.

Ten minutes more brought them to the top of the hill, from whence following the path for a few hundred yards they reached a rocky precipice

projecting a short distance into the valley. The edge was protected by a railing, and a seat had been placed for the convenience of those who wished to enjoy the view.

It was a glorious prospect! To the right lay the valley along which they had just passed on their way from B——; to the left the continuation of it towards Stonecombe and the sea. Nearly opposite to them were high wooded hills, on one side of which lay the valley which soon assumed the wilder character of a ravine, and on the other, a smaller valley running up towards Oakwood Hall. Quite to the left might be seen the ruins of an old tower, and beyond all, the deep blue sea.

Not far from the Point there was a small cottage, where visitors occasionally refreshed themselves with a glass of milk and a crust of bread. Mary walked there directly, to inquire after a sick child, and Herbert accompanied her. Egerton and Miss Campbell sat down on the little bench, and for a few minutes enjoyed the beauty of the view in silent admiration.

"How glorious!" muttered Egerton at last in a low tone. "I shall not easily forget Pilgrim's Point."

Was it the beauty of the prospect alone that made Egerton so certain that he should never forget it? We think not. The pure fresh air, the exertion of the ascent which had just been enough to send the blood tingling through his veins but not to fatigue, had combined with other nameless causes to produce a consciousness of strength both physical and mental, and with it an exhilaration, which he had rarely experienced before. He felt as if he could have marched down the hill side in half a dozen strides, have played at ninepins with the gigantic boulders that strewed the bottom of the opposite valley, have swum out to sea for very sport; all this and more seemed a mere nothing to him in the excitement of that moment. He had often prayed for energy, and now he felt as if his prayer had been granted in full measure. In the midst of all this tumult of vague feeling there stood out before him one new and distinct

purpose in life; with most men hope would have been the word, but with him it was a purpose, a purpose so fair, that the mere distant vision sent a thrill through his whole being. And yet this purpose was not his highest; but it threw such a bright light over all his other loftier aims that they themselves appeared in more glowing colours than before; and he felt that if that one thought were ever to be blotted from his soul, all those lofty aspirations which had hitherto constituted his inward life, would fade into cold and meaningless abstractions. His view of life had not gained in breadth or height, but it had gained infinitely in warmth and intensity. You may not believe this, reader; perhaps you have counted more than two-and-twenty summers,—perhaps you are no Henry Egerton. But with some natures five minutes are sufficient for such inward revolutions.

He seemed so absorbed in his reverie, that Miss Campbell did not care to interrupt it. At length, finding the silence rather embarrassing, she was just rising to follow her sister, when

Egerton, conscious that he had been somewhat remiss, said hurriedly, "Pilgrim's Point, the name is romantic, and must have some poetical origin. Is there any legend attached to the spot?"

"Oh yes, certainly," said Miss Campbell, "but I should be sorry to vouch for its truth. The story is, that a certain knight, named Sir Launcelot, was in love with the Lady Elfrida the daughter of a great lord who had a castle in the neighbourhood. The lady returned his affection, but as she was a rich heiress and Sir Launcelot was very poor, her father did not approve of his suit. Lady Elfrida however would not give up her knight so easily, and used to meet him clandestinely by moonlight on this spot. At last the old lord found it out, and as he was afraid that Sir Launcelot might run away with his daughter, he hit upon the following plan, for destroying her lover's hopes. He locked up his daughter, and gave out at first that she was very ill, and shortly afterwards that she was dead. There was a grand funeral procession,

and everybody believed that the Lady Elfrida had really been buried. Sir Launcelot was of course inconsolable, and determined to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As soon as he was fairly off, the cruel papa released his daughter, and urged her to accept some other richer suitor. She however remained constant to her lover, and seemed to take no pleasure in anything, but in visiting this point by moonlight. At the end of two years Sir Launcelot returned from his pilgrimage, and hurried at once to the spot where he had so often met the Lady Elfrida, whom he imagined to have been long dead. Suddenly he hears a step, and turning round, sees, as he believes, the lady's ghost approaching him. Forgetting the precipice, he starts back, falls over, and is killed on the spot. The lady of course enters a nunnery, and dies of grief soon after."

"What a melancholy conclusion!" said Egerton. "After all, there is nothing so absolutely impossible about it. At the present day, certainly, papas generally find some easier way

of getting rid of unwelcome suitors than by pretending to bury their daughters."

"I think at the present day," said Miss Campbell smiling, "the papas are generally not quite so hardhearted, or at any rate they are obliged to give in at last."

"We will hope so for their own sakes, as well as their daughters'," said Egerton, "but I rather doubt it. The same story in all essentials, is perhaps not so very rare even now. The vision of the lady whom an ambitious papa will not allow him to wed, has haunted many a poor fellow till he tumbles over a precipice: but it is astonishing what a halo is thrown around such old traditions by the mere lapse of time."

"And perhaps still more by chivalry," said Miss Campbell.

"What! are you on the subject of chivalry?" said Herbert, who had just returned with Mary, and had caught the last word. "Let me warn you, Egerton, that Bertha is a warm defender of those old ruffians in armour, the Knights Errant, and that if you say a word

against them, you are in her black books for ever."

"What nonsense you talk, Herbert!" said Bertha, smiling, and blushing slightly. "You know that we do not quite agree on the subject of chivalry, and yet I still contrive to retain a little respect for you."

"Thank you, Bertha, for that little, but please make it more as soon as you can; at the risk of losing it, however, I honestly confess I think chivalry was a great piece of humbug, and naturally disappeared before a very small amount of general enlightenment."

"But surely, Herbert, you will not deny that the Knights possessed one fine quality in a high degree, I mean courage?"

"I grant their courage as a general rule, but not that they had any particular monopoly of it. I believe that Corporal Stubbs, of the 120th, who puts on a thin red coat, and rushes up to a battery in the face of bayonets and grape shot, for the sake of his country, is at least as brave a man as Sir Hildebrand, who dons a coat of strong

steel mail, and breaks a lance in honor of his lady's eyes. What do you say, Egerton?"

"I am very much of the same opinion; but even granting their courage, it certainly did not manifest itself in a very reputable manner. Look at the old baronial robber fastnesses, in various parts of Europe —on the Rhine, for instance."

"But robbing was not a part of the true idea of a Knight," said Mary.

"At any rate it was the *practice* of a good many of them," replied Egerton. "I do not mean necessarily highway robbery. A little feud with a weaker baron in the neighbourhood may often perhaps have been considered a more respectable way of filling the baronial coffers."

"But the Knights Errant," said Miss Campbell, "went forth on their adventures, with the especial purpose of succouring virtue in distress. Surely there was something noble in a man's devoting his life to such objects!"

"Certainly," replied Egerton, "wherever they really *did* do so. But I fear, Miss Campbell, that I am an incorrigible sceptic in these mailed

protegés of yours. I cannot help regarding selfishness, vanity, and the love of excitement, as the realities, and the benevolent wish to succour distress, as the plausible sham in which they were dressed."

"That is the point," said Herbert. "The fact is, there was as much philanthropy in such knight errantry, as there is in foxhunting, but very little more. If these gentlemen had been so very anxious to lessen the misery in the world, they need have gone no farther than their own estates. Don't you think, Bertha, that if they had screwed a little less money or labour out of their serfs, they would have done more on the whole for human happiness?"

"If you will allow me," said Egerton, "I will endeavour to explain my meaning by an example. Herbert's father, we will suppose, hears that a poor woman in his parish has got a fever, and is in want of the necessaries of life; he puts his purse in his pocket and hurries off to the house. When he gets there he finds that the woman is perfectly well, and does not require his assistance. Now,

in such a case will Mr. Campbell be glad or sorry to find that the report was false?"

"Glad of course!"

"Now," continued Egerton, "let us represent to ourselves our former friend, Sir Hildebrand, riding out to succour virtue in distress. Sir Hildebrand rides and rides, day after day, but no cases come under his notice; he finds no young ladies locked up in castles and bullied by their brothers; no strong, bad barons grinding the poor, but all the people happy. What does Sir Hildebrand say to himself? Does he rejoice? No, he says, 'this is dreadfully slow work.' At last, hurrah! he sees a young lady tied to a tree by wicked robbers, and nearly dead with fright! Hurrah! here's a godsend indeed, here's luck for Sir Hildebrand! Now is that philanthropy, or love of excitement?"

Bertha smiled, but made no answer.

"At any rate," said Mary, "these Knights who find so little favour in your eyes, Mr. Egerton, have left us some fine old castles and plenty of subjects of romance."

"I think," said Miss Campbell, "they have left us something much more valuable; for whatever their failings may have been, at least we inherit from them the ideas of courtesy and knightly honour, and these are no trifling legacies."

"At last, Bertha," said Herbert laughing, "we have got upon common ground. Though I have no overweening respect for the men or their practices, I do believe that in common justice we must grant them that merit."

Egerton smiled.

"You seem sceptical, Egerton."

"I am, afraid," replied Egerton, "that the courtesy of the days of chivalry was but a pinchbeck article at best, that will not bear examination. It was an exaggerated observance of certain conventional forms of politeness, but it did not prevent men from picking quarrels for the mere fun of the thing—a practice which does not seem particularly courteous."

"But surely," said Herbert, "these quarrels were the exception, not the rule."

"I fear then the exceptions were very numerous. But tell me one thing; did they practise this courtesy which you claim for them to their equals alone, or did they extend it to their inferiors? Before you answer, however, allow me to remind you of your own observation, that they would have done more for human happiness if they had kicked their serfs a little less."

Mary smiled.

"Well," said Herbert, doubtfully. "I suppose, it must be granted that their courtesy was principally confined to their equals, at least as far as their own sex was concerned."

"Then," replied Egerton, "I cannot attach much value to it, as it evidently had no root in the love of one's neighbour, which I take to be the only foundation of true courtesy. It sprang from a feeling of caste rather than of our common humanity."

"Still," replied Herbert, "it is not fair to judge of the idea lying at the foundation of an institution, merely by the way in which it is

carried out by imperfect men. You might attack Christianity itself, were you to argue in that way."

"Was there any higher idea in the courtesy of chivalry than is contained in Christianity?"

"Certainly not," said Herbert.

"Then on what ground can chivalry lay claim to an idea which had been promulgated more than a thousand years before its own existence?"

Herbert paused.

"Do you not see," continued Egerton quickly, "that chivalry took the Christian idea of brotherly love, robbed it of its universality by making it an affair of rank and sex, disguised the miserable remnant in exaggerated forms, till it became a mere caricature of Christian courtesy, and its own parent could hardly recognize it; did *not* act up to it, and then claimed the honour of having enriched the world with a new idea? Christianity had said, love your neighbour, to which chivalry added, provided his estates are sufficiently large, and he has won his spurs by

killing a few of his fellow creatures according to the rules."

Bertha smiled. Mary laughed, but seeing that Herbert looked annoyed, she instantly looked grave, and said, "But knightly honour, Mr. Egerton. At any rate, chivalry may claim that idea as its own?"

"I fear not, Miss Campbell. Truth and honourable dealing are as much Christian virtues as brotherly love. They are certainly no discovery of chivalry. But there is another part of the idea which is certainly not Christian, and which has made this legacy of knightly honour a curse both to states and individuals. No other cause has done, and is still doing so much to confuse the moral perceptions of modern society."

"You speak in paradoxes," said Herbert. "How has it done that?"

"By making a distinction between what is morally right, and what is honourable. In reality they are absolutely identical. Do your duty at all costs, says Christianity. To which

chivalry adds, except at the cost of your reputation for courage."

"You refer of course to duelling. But the great majority of men do not fight in the whole course of their lives, so that I can hardly admit the practice to be such an overwhelming social disease as you appear to consider it."

"Not the duel itself," replied Egerton, "but the false reasoning to which it gives rise. If you argue against it with one of its advocates for five minutes you will probably hear some such remark as this—'I admit that from the highest moral point of view it is not to be defended, but still, when a man's reputation is at stake, I do not see how he can refuse to fight.' The man who argues thus may never be called on to fight. But what sort of conduct is to be expected from him in moments of temptation to other crimes, after he has once deliberately allowed reputation to usurp the place of duty? *Seeming*, not *being*, is the principle of such a man's morality. If you may kill a man to seem brave, you may swindle another, if you can do

it secretly, in order to seem honest by paying your debts."

"But the worldly code of honour does not sanction dishonesty!"

"Not directly," said Egerton, "but it adopts the principle that what a man *seems* is more important than what he *is*; and this rule, carried out consistently, may be made to justify dishonesty, under certain circumstances, just as easily as murder."

"Well, well," said Herbert, "there may be some truth in that, though I by no means agree with you entirely. But we are forgetting to enjoy the prospect in our philosophical discussions. How gloriously the sun is lighting up those woods, and how picturesque the old tower looks with the sea beyond! We must make an expedition to it to-morrow, Egerton?"

"I am afraid," said Miss Campbell, "we must think of going home now, for otherwise we shall make papa wait for dinner."

The party returned in the same order as that in which they had come. Egerton assisted Miss

Campbell down all the more difficult parts of the road, but the descent was too steep to admit of conversation. A little before they reached the bottom, the path became better, and no longer required such undivided attention.

"I must confess," said Miss Campbell, "that you have rather shaken my faith in those barons bold of the olden time, and that I shall not see the days of chivalry in quite such bright colours as I have done. There is something however to me very melancholy in finding little but selfishness and vanity in institutions which are often regarded as having been based on far higher and nobler feelings."

"I grant it," replied Egerton, "but if we lose something in the past, we gain yet more in the present, and the future, and so on the whole we have reason to rejoice. I do not wish to make the past appear one atom worse than it really was. But if on comparing it with the present, we find that it was often wanting in true nobility of soul, we have at least a proof of human progress in what is best and highest, and thus

obtain a reasonable footing for our hopes for the future. The world is indeed worldly still. Priestcraft, tyranny, hypocrisy, and every other form of selfishness and sin are prowling through it wherever man has set his foot. But life would be absolutely intolerable without a firm faith that all this host of evils is gradually yielding ground before the sure but silent step of human progress. If this faith be a delusion, then has Christianity been a failure. But heaven be praised, it is no delusion! Look at London with all its haunts of misery and sin! It is bad enough still, but where before there were tournaments or bull-fights, now there are hospitals, libraries, and missions to the poor. Where before, martyrs were burnt at the stake for their opinions, now a cry of indignation is heard to the furthermost end of the land, if a man is considered to be unjustly mulcted in the amount of one day's labour!"

As Egerton said these words, they reached the bottom of the hill, and joined Herbert and Mary, who had arrived a few minutes before them and

had already got into the carriage. There was very little conversation during the rest of the way, and Egerton thought Herbert seemed in low spirits, but was quite at a loss to account for them. Rather less than half an hour's drive brought them to the Vicarage. They were received at the door by a gentleman with such a very decided likeness to Herbert, that even under other circumstances Egerton would have had no great difficulty in recognising the Vicar. He was a fine-looking man with a very kind expression of countenance. He seemed to be about sixty years of age, and his hair was perfectly grey. He gave Egerton a hearty welcome to Stonecombe, and begged his nieces to stay to dinner, which invitation however they declined, on the ground that they were expected home. The meeting of Herbert and his father was warm and affectionate, and could leave no doubt on the minds of those who witnessed it, of the thoroughly good understanding which existed between them. It raised both in Egerton's estimation, and still further confirmed an opinion

he had already formed that afternoon on other grounds, namely, that for the next few days at any rate, his lines had fallen in very pleasant places.

The dinner with its cozy dessert, old port, and numerous inquiries about Cambridge men, may safely be left to the reader's imagination. After tea the Vicar explained to Egerton at some length the unwarrantable assumptions and fallacious reasoning upon which Professor Sandstone had based his untenable theory respecting the moon's density, as also the principal features of his own crushing refutation of that theory in the Cambridge Philosophical. Egerton was a very silent listener, but truth compels us to add, not a very attentive one; for while the Vicar's observations concerned more particularly the moon's interior, Egerton in imagination was sitting on a somewhat elevated point of the earth's surface, no other indeed than that already known to the reader as Pilgrim's Point.

CHAPTER IV.

STONECOMBE is a small town in the county of M——, beautifully situated near the extremity of a valley running obliquely towards the sea. The greater part of it is built in the valley itself, but a few small streets run a short way up the side of the hills on the east, till high rocks oppose an impenetrable barrier to its further extension in this direction. The hills on the opposite side sink gradually till within half a mile of the sea, when they rise again and terminate abruptly in a bold headland presenting a precipitous face several hundred feet in height,

and surmounted by the ruin of a small tower, probably a watch tower in ancient times. The hollow caused by this rise and fall forms a second small valley running nearly parallel to the shore, and debouching in the first at an acute angle nearly opposite to the town. It is however but about a mile in length, as it rises rapidly and ends in heights nearly as lofty as the promontory itself. The south side is bare and rocky, but the north side is clothed with hanging woods of beech and oak, a circumstance to which the old mansion situated near the further extremity is probably indebted for its name of Oakwood Hall. The larger valley, in which the town stands, takes a circuitous course as it penetrates further inland, and the enterprising tourist who explores it, will find his labour amply repaid by the romantic and picturesque scenery which it presents to his view at every turn. After a few miles it assumes a very wild character. The woods cease entirely, and precipitous rocks cutting the clear blue sky with their bold outline, frown on each other from opposite sides in

sullen and majestic grandeur. Large moss-grown boulders lie scattered about their bases in wild confusion, sometimes blocking up the path and offering considerable impediments to further progress. This part of the valley is called Stony Combe, and has probably given its name to the town, which by the nearest road over the hills is only distant about three miles.

Oakwood Hall is a fine old house of considerable architectural pretensions, and in the Elizabethan style. It is surrounded by a park of no great extent, but commanding many beautiful views over the sea on one side, and the surrounding country on the other. Mr. Douglas Campbell, its late proprietor, and grandfather of Herbert, had been in early life a successful merchant in Glasgow. During a pedestrian excursion in the Highlands he had made the acquaintance of a very pretty and amiable farmer's daughter, and the romantic character of the scenery having given a similar tinge to his imagination, he had immediately fallen in love.

For the first three years Mr. Campbell devoted all the leisure he could spare from his business to the education of the woman to whom he had so entirely given his affections, and the time passed happily enough. But when at length he brought his young wife to Glasgow, he found that he had made a rather greater sacrifice to his passion than he had calculated on in the first instance. Nobody could deny that Mrs. Campbell was very pretty and very loveable, but the deficiencies in her early education would occasionally manifest themselves in a manner extremely painful to her husband. Little offences against social conventionalities which had only amused him in the country, annoyed him considerably as soon as he felt that they could not escape unfavourable criticism from his town acquaintance. The head might be averted and the ill-suppressed smile concealed, but the consciousness of its existence at all was gall and wormwood to a man whose affection was only equalled by his pride. His commercial speculations in the few preceding years had been

attended with very great success, and as he was still a young man, it required some self-denial to stop short in such a prosperous career. But his wife's yearning for the country, coupled with a very natural dislike of moving in a society in which she did not feel quite at ease, turned the scale against the ambition of becoming a millionaire. About this time Oakwood Hall, together with the advowson of Stonecombe, came into the market; and as they seemed to offer many advantages, Mr. Douglas Campbell purchased them, and settled down into a country gentleman for the rest of his life.

It is not quite impossible that one of the advantages of Oakwood Hall in the eyes of Mr. Campbell was its great distance from the residence of his father-in-law, with whose family he was not anxious for any very close and constant intercourse. At the same time it is only just to add, that he never threw any obstacles in the way of his wife's visiting her family, whenever she felt inclined. Upon two or three occasions indeed he accompanied her himself, and bagged

many brace of grouse in the company of the old Macdonald, who appeared to feel some pride in the certainty of his son-in-law's Manton, and his capacity for imbibing cold whisky punch after the exploits of the day were over. Once also, did Mr. Macdonald return the visit at Oakwood, and commit terrible devastation among the pheasants on that estate. But there was a certain stiffness and reserve in the intercourse between the old Highlander and his son-in-law, which appeared to have some deeper ground than the mere difference in their social position, and he could never be induced to cramp his long legs in an English stage coach for a second visit to his daughter's home.

The county families could not quite forgive the Glasgow merchant for purchasing such a fine estate in their neighbourhood, as they would have much preferred a more aristocratic accession to their society. The proprietor of Oakwood however was not a person to be entirely overlooked—no, not even if he had made his money as a West End tailor, and a very short time

elapsed before cards and invitations flowed in at the Hall from all sides.

But although a visiting acquaintance was thus established with the neighbouring families, Mr. Campbell perceived, or thought he perceived, that the commercial origin of his preserves was never entirely forgotten, even by those who did him the honour to shoot over them. He was far too proud to allow it to be seen that he had taken offence at any supposed slights; but the offence *was* taken all the same, and rankled perhaps the more deeply from finding no outward expression. Soon after his removal therefore to Stonecombe, he began to withdraw himself gradually from the society of persons to whom he felt no cordiality, and the breach once opened between himself and his Tory neighbours was soon widened by his Radical politics, to which personal feeling had lent additional bitterness.

Mr. Campbell died about thirty years after purchasing Oakwood, and was buried with all due pomp in the new family vault at Stone-

combe. He was not destined to remain long its sole tenant. Mrs. Campbell's health had always been delicate, and her affliction at the loss of a husband to whom she had been most tenderly attached, undermined her remaining strength, and made her fall an easy prey to an attack of fever, within the first few months of her widowhood.

Mr. Douglas Campbell left three children, of whom the eldest, John Elwyn Campbell, had succeeded to the estate of Oakwood, and was residing there at the time at which this narrative commences. Besides the estate, he had also inherited his father's politics, coupled with a strong dislike to all persons of ancient family or aristocratic pretensions. This feeling was rendered still stronger by an incident in his early life. He had become attached to the daughter of a nobleman, had proposed, and been rejected, in favour of Sir Roderick Egerton, a young baronet, and formerly his most intimate college friend. His personal vanity was deeply wounded by this failure, and he endeavoured to

find some relief in attributing it to his rival's title and genealogical tree. Still in his heart he was fully aware that there was nothing worldly about Lady Fanny Selwyn, and that a genuine attachment was the real ground of the choice she had made.

Ten years after this disappointment, John Campbell married the daughter of an attorney in Stonecombe. She was a woman of great beauty, good temper, and intellectual tastes, and in spite of a certain imperiousness of temper on the part of Mr. Campbell, the union was decidedly a happy one. Mrs. Campbell died about three years before the opening of this narrative, leaving two daughters, Bertha and Mary, of the respective ages of seventeen and fifteen.

Mr. Douglas Campbell's second son, the Rev. Edward Campbell, had been educated at Cambridge, and held the living of Stonecombe. The vicarage was a comfortable residence at a very short distance from the park, having been greatly enlarged by the late Mr. Campbell on the occasion of his son's marriage. Mr. Edward Campbell's

happiness had been of short duration, as his wife died at the age of four-and-twenty, leaving one son, a child then two years of age, the identical Herbert Campbell who has already been presented to the reader.

Mr. Douglas Campbell's youngest child was a daughter, named Harriet. She had never been married, and generally resided at Edinburgh.

The two brothers, John and Edward Campbell, were sincerely attached to each other, in spite of the great difference in their characters. John, though never demonstrative, was a kind father, according to his own conception of the word. He was very much inclined to be despotic, and never allowed his will to be questioned with impunity; but then he entertained the most undoubting belief that his ordinances were far more advantageous for the persons they concerned, than any other course which they might have preferred for themselves. He was ready to sacrifice his personal convenience to the benefit of others, according to his own notions

of the requirements of the case, but his pride would never allow him to sacrifice his own views or his own will. He was charitable to the poor, but then his charities were dispersed in a cold unsympathising manner, which robbed the gift of any other than its material value. He spent a rather secluded life; but when the sports of the field, his magisterial duties, or electioneering business brought him into contact with his equals or superiors in rank, he was cold, forbidding, and reserved.

The Rev. Edward Campbell was the very opposite of all these things. He was a warm, kind-hearted genial man, very active in his parish duties, always ready to listen to a case of distress, and rarely returned from a walk in Stonecombe, with as much money in his pocket as he had when he went out. He was devotedly attached to his only son, whom he treated with the most perfect confidence, and consulted in all his arrangements. In fact their intercourse was conducted on a footing of equality, but without any prejudice to the sincere respect which

Herbert entertained for his father, whose honest loving character he fully appreciated.

Bertha and Mary Campbell had been educated at home, under the superintendence of Miss Witheringham, a finishing governess of considerable pretensions, but unfortunately deficient in two rather essential qualifications, namely, heart and imagination.

The Vicar soon saw the real state of the case, and hinted his suspicions to his brother; but as his observations were immediately met with a declaration of unqualified approbation of Miss Witheringham, he saw that it would be useless to say anything more, and dropped the subject. Some months afterwards he proposed reading history with his nieces for a few hours every week. Miss Witheringham looked rather black at this encroachment on her domain, but Mr. Campbell made no objection, and she was accordingly constrained to put a good face upon the matter. The change to his young pupils was like a magical transformation. Uncle Edward talked to them about the same persons

and events that had previously been crammed into their memory by Miss Witheringham. But the men and their actions, as treated in that lady's prosings, had been as dead and as dry as the bones in the valley of the Prophet Ezekiel; whereas in Uncle Edward's hands they seemed to live again, and the past was made to assume the vividness and reality of the present. The Vicar's plot succeeded. Miss Witheringham, seeing the great preference her pupils gave to their uncle's instruction, took a tiff one fine morning, and then took herself off,—but no tears were shed. Uncle Edward, on the contrary, chuckled in secret at the success of his very innocent usurpation. The studies were prosecuted more vigorously than ever under his auspices, and his pupils were saved from arriving at a conclusion to which they had been rapidly tending, namely, that all books except novels and poetry were an unmitigated bore.

Herbert passed the greater part of his vacations at Stonecombe. In the season he used to shoot a good deal with his Uncle John, and was

of course very often at Oakwood. His fair cousins were also very frequent visitors at the Vicarage, and thus Herbert saw a great deal of them. The result was—but the reader can guess the result.

Some persons used to think a great deal of the late Captain Warner's invention for destroying fleets and fortresses; others believe still more firmly in Lord Dundonald. Some persons advocate needle guns, and others again regard Minie rifles as still more destructive weapons. Our own private opinion, however, is this—that the most dangerous thing in existence, the most sure to produce an inextinguishable conflagration is—a pretty cousin. Greek fire is nothing in comparison! Not only is the first wound inflicted by this weapon tremendous in itself, but it is always followed up by inflammation of the heart, falling off of the appetite, sleepless nights, and—worse than all, a tendency to write bad poetry.

Now if a man's position even with one pretty cousin be so hopeless, what must have been

Herbert's danger who was constantly within easy gunshot, or rather eye-shot, of two?

At a very early age Herbert had acted with great judgment under circumstances so trying. He had seen that retreat was impossible and resistance hopeless, and accordingly surrendered at discretion to the onslaught of Mary's blue eyes. They often met in the Sunday schools in Stonecombe, in which both took a great interest. Mary indeed taught there constantly, but it is equally certain that she learnt a little too. The old people were by no means blind to what was going on, but they saw no sufficient reason to interfere, and determined neither to make nor to mar, but to let things take their natural course.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Egerton and the Vicar had nearly finished breakfast before Herbert made his appearance. He seemed in rather low spirits, and looked unusually pale, but in answer to his father's anxious enquiries, declared that there was nothing the matter with him beyond a slight headache, which he attributed to his having passed a sleepless night.

"Well," said the Vicar, "the sea breezes will soon put all that to rights. And what are your plans for the day? I think you had better take a ride, and show your friend something of the country."

"I am afraid, I must ask Egerton to excuse me for this morning. The fact is, I should be very dull company, and besides that, I have promised my cousins to go up to the Hall directly after breakfast."

"Do not let me interfere with your arrangements in any way," said Egerton. "I shall have no difficulty in occupying my time."

"You will find plenty of books in the library," said Herbert, "or if you are fond of pistol shooting, mine are at your service. There is a target near the fish-pond. The gardener will show you where it is."

"Thank you, I rather think I shall read till luncheon."

The Vicar looked up, a little surprised at this apparent neglect of the duties of hospitality on the part of his son. He could not quite comprehend it. But supposing that the young men completely understood each other, and that Herbert had reasons for wishing to spend the morning alone, he made no remark, and the subject was dropped. A few minutes afterwards Her-

bert started on his walk, and Egerton retired to a small sitting-room adjoining his bed-room, which had been assigned to him as a study, took out his books and began to read—that is, in the Cambridge sense of the expression—in other words, to study mathematics.

Several circumstances contributed to make it more than usually difficult for Egerton to concentrate his thoughts upon the subject before him. He could not help feeling a good deal surprised that Herbert should leave him entirely to his own resources on the very first day of his visit. He would most gladly have joined Herbert in his walk to the Hall; but the latter had expressed his intention of going there alone, in too decided a manner to allow of Egerton offering his company without a direct invitation. Besides this, there had been a slight reserve about his friend's manner, for which he was quite unable to account. He thought over all that had passed between them, but remembered nothing that could have given Herbert any reasonable ground of offence. He had been particularly

guarded in his manner towards Mary Campbell. His explanations the day before had been most open and satisfactory. It seemed impossible to attribute Herbert's manner to anything like jealousy, and he discarded the idea as soon as it had occurred to him. Low spirits arising from reading too hard were the only solution of the problem that suggested itself, and though not a very satisfactory one, he was obliged to adopt it for the want of a better. Having come to this conclusion, he applied himself once more to his work.

But it would not do. He could make nothing of it. The symbols would keep taking the form in his imagination of certain steep steps cut in the rock, and a certain bench on the top of it; and the curves would keep reminding him of a certain winding valley that could be seen from the bench in question. In this wilful imagination of his, other forms were also mixed up with the rocks and the bench, and the valley; but it is needless to go further into all the tricks and vagaries which this most unaccountable faculty

seemed determined to indulge in. At last he rose from his chair and looked out of the window.

Immediately before him lay the Vicar's garden. It was prettily laid out, but it did not long arrest his attention, for beyond it at the distance of less than half a mile he saw the bright green swards and aged oaks of a gentleman's park. Something among the trees caught his eye; at any rate he looked at them with peculiar interest. It was but a little brown speck after all; but yet he gazed at it, as if he expected to find in it the solution of his problem. "Yes," said he to himself, "it must be so. It must be the top of one of the chimneys peeping out above the trees. I wish I knew for certain."

There was a knock at the door. "Come in," said Egerton.

"Please sir," said Mrs. Brady, the housekeeper, as she entered the room, "please sir, 'ave you any things as you would like to send to the wash?"

"Thank you, Mrs. Brady, I don't think I

have, but I will look presently and see. Oh, by the bye, can you tell me what that brown thing is among the trees there?"

"Yes, sir, sertny, sir. That's master's old brown mare, sir. It's very old now, sir, but I remember that brown mare when it was a baby, and my old man, John Brady, used to—"

"No, no, I don't mean that; I mean above the trees. It looks something like a turret or a chimney."

"Lor sir! Why I thought everybody knew that! And yet I do remember too that when Mr. Rogers was here, sir, and John had fitched up his luggage—"

"Never mind Mr. Rogers now, Mrs. Brady, but please tell me what it is."

"Why, sir, that's the 'all in course. That's Oakwood 'all. My old man was gard'ner there a many, many years, but he's dead and gone now, sir, and I'm a widder, a lone widder." Here Mrs. Brady applied her apron to her eyes. "But I think," she continued, "I think I'm gitting used to it by degrees. Ah, sir, you don't

know what it is to be a widder, and I 'ope you never may. There were things connected with my John's death, as made it very painful, and I can't bear even for to hallude to them. He died a shocking death, did John."

Egerton felt bound to express his sympathy, and to inquire shortly into the circumstances connected with the demise of the late John Brady, Esq.

"He died of ouskepus, sir," said Mrs. Brady.

Egerton had never heard of that disease.

"Well it was so, sir. We 'ad a 'oliday to go to Lunnon, and went to stay at a uncle's of mine, and while he was there, Mr. Stiggins, as knew my uncle, came to John and said, said he, 'now I know, Brady, as you are a discreet man, and I want a ousekeepa, and there must be a many sich in the country cheaper than in Lunnon, and will you get me one, and I'll give her a matter o' forty pound a year, and sit at my table except when there's company.' So when we come back from Lunnon, Brady put a 'vertisement in the paper about a ousekepa, and

forty pound, and sit at the table, and please apply to John Brady. Well, sir, no sooner was that 'ere 'vertisement in the paper, than a tall woman comes about the place, and then another tall woman, and then a little woman, and then they come in sich numbers as I nor John couldn't count 'em, and he was sharp at sums too was John, but it riglar swarmed with ousekeepas. A matter o' five and twenty, all come in one day, and next day maybe ten or fifteen more. Now John warn't over strong like, when it came to talk to a woman, as I remember myself; but he *did* ask 'em everythink, and they all had crakters and deferences, and John was quite muddled like, and didn know which to choose. At last he did choose one as 'ad the most crakters, one of 'em ever so long, and he went to bed, and thought it was all over. But no, sir, would you believe it? Wherever John went after that day, he see one of them other ousekeepas as he didn choose, and they looked at him so fierce like and savage, and one of 'em asked him what he thought of hisself as a judge of ousekeepas

she would like very much to know, she would indeed if you please? Wherever he turned, sir, there was sure to be a ousekeepa, and so as he was a ailing before, it preyed on his sperrits, and he took to his bed and so he died."

"How very sad," said Egerton with his handkerchief to his mouth.

"Ah, you may well say that, sir. I only wish he'd never come here, but had kep to his first perfession as was so respectable and connected with the church."

Egerton felt that politeness demanded that he should inquire into the nature of Mr. Brady's original occupation.

"Why, sir at first he was a mute at a respectable undertaker's near Lunnon. Praps it did try his feelins a little at first, but he got used to it by degrees, and the ride 'ome afterwards sitting a top o' the 'earse with his legs danglin down at the sides, sir, that used to restore the equilibum of his sperrits. 'It an't the beer, Betsey, he used to say, it an't the beer as does it. No, its them cheerful rides 'ome in the air, with the

conscience that all's been done suitable and comfortable for the revivors, and just as the party hisself would have wished.' He *did* understand that business thoroughly, sir, and when he stood at the front-doors, could say many serious and symperthisin things about flowers in the field, and sich like over the railings, down to the servants in the airey. Ah, sir, sich is life! And if so be you'll please to put the things out, they will go along with Master Herbert's, who—lor how white he does look to be sure, and I'll tell Susan to put plenty of starch into the collars."

Saying these words, Mrs. Brady left the room. In spite of the interruption, her visit proved rather beneficial than otherwise, for after indulging in a long look at the brown chimney, and a smile at the old brown mare, Egerton set to work with far more vigour than before, and actually read till luncheon was announced. After the conclusion of the meal, as he was leaving the room, the Vicar asked him how he proposed to spend the afternoon.

"I had intended taking a walk by the sea-side," replied Egerton, "but if—"

"I was merely going to suggest," said the Vicar, "that if you had nothing better to do, you might call on my brother. You will probably find Herbert at the Hall, and then you could take a walk together afterwards. But any other day will do for that as well, and I dare say you would prefer a solitary stroll."

"On the contrary, I should much prefer calling on Mr. Campbell, and taking a walk with Herbert. Have you any message?"

"No, thank you, none for my brother. But you may tell Herbert I hope he will dine at home to-day, for I have seen very little of him as yet."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Egerton, as soon as he had shut the study door. "I suppose I might have called the first day, but somehow or other, I hardly liked to do so. Now, however, that my good friend the Vicar, God bless him! has given me a commission, I must go of course, as a matter of duty."

After a brisk walk of twenty minutes, Egerton reached the lodge gates. The drive wound round a small copse, and he had hardly proceeded a hundred yards, when at a sudden turn in the road, he perceived a lady at a short distance before him. The first glance informed him that it was the younger sister. "If I am to have a *tête-à-tête*," thought Egerton, "I should certainly have preferred the—"

"Good afternoon, Miss Campbell. I intended to call at the Hall. Shall I find Mr. Campbell at home?"

"Papa! oh yes, I believe so. That is—at least,—if he has not already gone out."

"Herbert is here, is he not? I have a message for him from his father."

"My cousin will be here directly. He has only just gone to the house, to speak to one of papa's tenants about some parish business."

There was a slight pause. Egerton was considering the best means of breaking it, when Mary saved him the trouble.

"I believe you see a great deal of Herbert at Cambridge, do you not?"

"He is by far the most intimate friend I have there, and although our acquaintance is of recent date, there is no man whose friendship I value more. We are exceedingly different in many respects, and yet I believe we understand each other better than any of our older acquaintances."

"I am afraid he has been reading too hard lately. He does not look at all well, and—and—"

Mary hesitated. Then turning quickly, she continued in a voice which trembled a little in spite of her efforts at composure, "As you are such an intimate friend of my cousin's, I will speak to you without reserve. He will be here directly, and there is no time for long explanations. It has struck us this morning rather painfully—that is, I have observed something odd and flighty in his manner, and cannot help thinking he has some secret source of annoyance which he does not like to—to—"

"Indeed! I have no idea what it can be.

We have no secrets from each other, and he is so open that I am sure he would have told me if he had had anything preying on his mind. But how did he show it?"

"He seemed at first in low spirits, and when I rallied him a little, he laughed and tried to turn it off; but still there was something about his manner which did not seem quite natural. He said indeed, that he had everything to make him happy; especially now that you were here. But even then, there was a suppressed bitterness about his tone—no, not exactly bitterness, but I thought perhaps he might have got into some trouble that you knew of, and that—that—"

"I do not know of any, Miss Campbell, and you may feel quite sure that if he had anything to annoy him, it could be nothing that he would be ashamed to mention, for he is a thoroughly noble fellow."

"I feel sure of that," said Mary, the tears starting to her eyes as she spoke, "but still—"

"Ah, Egerton!" exclaimed Herbert, as he came upon them rather suddenly from a side path.

"I have just come from the Vicarage with orders from your father to lay an embargo on you and bring you home to dinner," said Egerton, wishing by a forced cheerfulness to divert Herbert's attention from Mary's embarrassment. "If Mr. Campbell is at home, I should like to call on him first; and then if you have no objection, we can take a constitutional together on the beach. It will be rather more refreshing than the Trumpington Road at any rate. Are you inclined?"

"Oh yes, if you like," said Herbert rather abruptly. "My uncle is engaged in business with Mr. Walker, so there is no use in your going to the house, merely to leave a card."

Both Egerton and Mary were startled at Herbert's manner. He was walking between them, and as they looked up toward his face at the same instant, their eyes met, and Mary changed colour. It was only for a moment, but it did not escape Herbert's observation, who imme-

diately glanced from one to the other as if he were expecting to receive some explanation. None however was offered, and a painful feeling of constraint seemed to oppress the whole trio, as they continued their walk for a few minutes in silence.

"Well, Egerton," said Herbert at length, "I think we may as well start at once. Good afternoon, Mary. Tell my uncle I am going to dine at home to-day."

With these words Herbert strode off at a rapid pace in the direction of the lodge. Egerton accompanied him, and was considering in what manner he could best enter upon the subject that occupied his mind without irritating his friend's feelings, when Herbert said, "may I ask, what was the subject of conversation between yourself and my cousin just before I joined you?"

Egerton paused an instant. Herbert's face flushed as he continued, "I ask, because it is impossible for me to imagine that you can have any secrets together."

"And I did not answer your question immediately, because I wished to consider whether I should be justified in doing so. I see now, that it would be a slight breach of confidence, and I must therefore decline to repeat what passed."

"A breach of confidence?"

"If you are determined to know what it was," continued Egerton, "you must ask her yourself. But if you take my advice you will let the matter drop. I say this for your cousin's sake, as I think she would prefer it."

"Do you recollect what you told me yesterday about your former acquaintance with her?"

"Certainly."

"And now, the very next day, I find that you have secrets with her; and when I accidentally interrupt your very interesting conversation, you are both embarrassed, and the tears are standing in her eyes. I think you must allow that you put my faith to a rather severe trial."

"Do you believe in my honour?" said Egerton, turning short round, and facing Herbert.

"Certainly I do."

"And also that you possess your cousin's affections?"

"I have no doubt whatever on that point," said Herbert coldly.

"Then I think those two facts ought to satisfy you. I should have imagined that my declaration yesterday might have been sufficient, but as I see it was not, I now repeat to you my assurance, that I have not the slightest tender feeling towards her. Even were she not engaged to yourself, I should still make no attempt to gain her affections."

"Indeed! And how has she lost so much in your good opinion?"

"Do not misunderstand me. I admire her as much as before. But I perceive now that I was mistaken in imagining that she would ever have been the wife for me."

"Well, I suppose I must enquire no further," said Herbert after a moment's pause, "I felt vexed, I confess. But I dare say it was very absurd. We will not quarrel at any rate, Egerton."

"Quarrel! Why, what on earth should we quarrel about?"

"Nothing, nothing, of course. But I have got such a bad headache. I do not feel much inclined for a walk, and had rather go home at once. I am sure you will excuse me."

"Certainly, if you wish it; though I should have thought a little walk would have done you good."

"Look there," said Herbert; "Do you see that path? That is your nearest way to the beach. About two hundred yards further on, it branches off on both sides, but you must take the turning to the right, and in less than ten minutes you will reach the cliff. Keep along the edge for a hundred yards, and you will find a very steep path down to the sea. Don't break your neck, and remember we dine at six."

"Positively a touch of jealousy, after all!" said Egerton to himself, as soon as Herbert had left him. "After my explanations of yesterday, it is quite beyond my comprehension. I believe though that it is more physical than anything

else. He has been reading too hard, that is clear. He has been tearing his nerves to pieces with strong tea and late hours. I do not wonder at Miss Campbell's alarm, for I have rarely seen him so irritable. He little dreams of the new safeguard I have against the lovely Mary's charms. Half a dozen words from me would satisfy him that I am not making any sacrifice in renouncing all hopes of her favour. But I have had enough of premature confidences. No. no, I will not make such a blunder a second time."

When Egerton met Herbert at dinner, he was particularly glad to observe that he had partially recovered his spirits, and also that he seemed desirous to obliterate all unpleasant reminiscences of their previous conversation. After tea, the Vicar resumed his argument against the crude hypotheses of Professor Sandstone, at the point at which he had left it on the preceding evening. He had just completed it, when an unfortunate "yes, certainly," from Egerton, where a "no, of course not" had been expected, made him doubt

whether his young friend's scientific attainments were as great as he had originally supposed. He was considering whether he should not recommence the whole proof from the very beginning, when Egerton, (we blush for him as we write the words) positively—gaped. This decided the question at once. The Vicar looked at his watch, and finding it was already past eleven, rang the bell for candlesticks, and advising Egerton to go to bed, retired to his study.

CHAPTER VI.

JEALOUSY, even in the mildest form of the complaint, is not generally considered as favourable to sleep, and it is not therefore to be wondered at, that Herbert passed another restless night. Egerton was much struck, with his haggard look when he met him at the breakfast table the next morning, and in the belief that he was suffering from nervous irritability, endeavoured to soothe him by an unwonted degree of friendship and cordiality. So far from producing the desired effect, Egerton's manner seemed to Herbert almost like an assumption of

superiority, and it required all his self-control, not to give his resentment some open expression. The recollection, however, that Egerton was his guest, coupled with the conviction of his perfect innocence of any intention to offend, acted as a powerful restraint, and he allowed his ill-humonr to take no more objectionable form than that of a certain cold reserve, with which he met all Egerton's advances.

It was only eleven o'clock when Herbert reached the hall. He asked to see his uncle, and was immediately shewn into the library.

"Ah, Herbert, how are you?" was the first friendly greeting. "You were looking rather pale when I saw you yesterday, but I thought a night's rest would set you to rights. I am afraid you have been reading too hard. You know, my dear fellow, because your father was fourth wrangler, that is no reason why you should half kill yourself to be one too."

"Oh! there is not much the matter with me, uncle, thank you. I have suffered a little from headache lately, but it is nothing very serious."

"Well, well, the sea air will soon set you up again. Your father had you yesterday evening, so you must dine with us to-day."

"Thank you, uncle," said Herbert. "There is nothing I should like better."

"I am very glad you have come. Walker dines with us, and I should like you to see more of him. He is a capital man of business, Herbert, a really shrewd fellow, and has shown great judgment as well as legal knowledge in the way he has conducted a case for me lately."

"I believe he is an able attorney, sir," replied Herbert.

"Yes, he is that, Herbert, but he is also something more. There is no nonsense about him. He does not give himself airs like so many of the young men now-a-days. Take, for instance, that young coxcomb Mr. Quickman. Why, would you believe it, ever since his uncle has been made Lord Botherton, he sticks his glass in his eye, and looks as if he hardly knew me when we meet. I like to see a man not above earning his bread. The law is a highly respect-

able profession, and Walker is no bad specimen of it either. I hope you will become more intimate with him."

"I hope not," thought Herbert, but he discreetly kept the wish to himself, and only replied, "how is your gout, sir, this morning?"

"Oh, thank you, I think it is getting better on the whole. Dr. Freeman was here yesterday, but though I have a good deal of confidence in him generally speaking, I don't think he understands my constitution. He has got the absurd notion into his head, that I live too well, and wants me to give up my port for a time. I told him it was all nonsense, and that he would starve me, if I let him have his own way. Bertha and Mary however make capital nurses."

"How are they, sir, this morning?"

"Quite well thank you. At least I have not heard anything to the contrary. By the way, they told me you had a friend staying with you, a Mr. Egerton I think they said. Is he a relation of Sir Roderick?"

"Yes uncle, he is Sir Roderick's second son."

A slight shade passed over Mr. Campbell's countenance, but it was soon gone, and he continued, "Sir Roderick's second son! Oh, I recollect. His eldest son, William I think they call him, is in bad health, and lives abroad. I know Sir Roderick; indeed we were at Cambridge together. But I don't much like him—we don't draw well together. However I still see him sometimes on business, and I recollect last Quarter Sessions, he told me that he had had rather alarming news about his eldest son. But I dare say you would like to see your cousins. I believe you will find them in the garden. They almost live out of doors this fine weather."

Herbert had been longing for some opportunity to escape, and gladly availed himself of his uncle's suggestion. As he was well acquainted with his cousin's favourite haunts, he had no difficulty in choosing what direction to take. After crossing the lawn he struck into a winding path through the shrubbery called the willow walk. In a few minutes he reached a

second lawn bounded on the left by lilacs, acacias, and other trees. On the right the ground rose gradually for about a hundred yards and then terminated in cliffs that skirted the beach, which lay some two hundred feet below. On the very edge of the precipice there was a little summer-house looking over the sea on one side, and Oakwood Hall, with its well-wooded park and pleasure grounds, on the other. In the middle of the lawn, but rather nearer to the side on which Herbert approached it, was a clump of six or seven fine old oaks, and underneath their broad rich shade, a garden bench.

In a little recess, a few yards distant from the place at which the willow walk opened upon the lawn, there was another garden bench, called the willow seat. It was in great measure concealed by a slight bend in the path, but a person sitting on it commanded a view of the old oaks and the lawn through one or two small gaps between the trees immediately surrounding it. Herbert entertained no doubt that he should find his cousins at their favourite haunt near the oaks,

but he was disappointed, and throwing himself at full length upon the willow seat he gave himself up to his reflections.

He was soon awakened from his painful reverie by the sound of voices, and looking up saw the sisters walking slowly from the pavilion on the cliff towards the seat by the oaks. Miss Campbell sat down on the bench and began reading. Mary sat on the ground at her feet, and laid her head on Bertha's lap. She had taken off her hat; her hair had become unloosened, but believing they were quite alone, she had left it so. As it fell in broad rich lines over her sister's dress, it looked like a golden pattern on a snow-white ground. The two sisters formed a pretty picture, to which the oaks and their deep shade formed no unfitting frame. Herbert would have liked to enjoy it longer, but he knew his cousins did not see him, and he felt almost like a spy.

"Good morning," he said with an attempt at a cheerful voice, as soon as he came within speaking distance.

"Ah, Herbert, good morning," said Mary as she sprang to her feet, and blushing and laughing at her *negligée coiffure,* endeavoured to restore it to its former order.

Herbert's heart leaped with exultation when he saw that blush, and he began to be comforted with the belief that he had really been making a fool of himself.

"How pale you are!" continued Mary. "Why you really look quite ill. Doesn't he Bertha?

"Oh I am quite well," replied Herbert. "Only I did not sleep a great deal last night."

"I know how that is," said Mary. "You sit up too late working away at those horrid mathematics. Of what use can all those great sheets of ugly crinkum crankum things ever be to you? Now once for all, Herbert, I beg you to understand most distinctly that I do not consider it as a matter of option, but that I insist on your not bothering your head about them in that outrageous manner. If, however, you should dare to disobey me, I intend to take some opportunity

of stealing your books. I shall turn them to a much better purpose, for I shall give them to the best children in my school to make tails to their kites with."

"In this particular case, Mary you are laboring under a mistake, as I have not opened a book for the last four or five days."

"Well, Herbert," said Miss Campbell, "at any rate you should take a week's holiday now, or you will knock yourself up before the examination. I cannot compliment you on your looks at present. I quite agree with Mary, and shall join her marauding expedition to your study; so you had better save your books by submitting at once, and with a good grace, to a little healthy idleness."

Herbert was beginning to feel quite happy again, when Mary added quickly. "By the bye, Herbert, what have you done with your friend to day? Does he study hard too? Is he a regular reading man?"

"I believe," said Herbert, "that Egerton has already commenced operations, but I have only

seen him for a few minutes at breakfast, how did you like him?"

"Like him!" exclaimed Mary, "I liked him extremely. I have not been so interested for a long time as I was in all he said about chivalry, and the knights errant, and how they only wanted excitement and all that sort of thing, but did not seek adventures from high motives. I think him a great addition to our party, Herbert, and I am very glad you have brought him here."

Thinking that her eulogy had slightly overstepped the bounds of maidenly reserve, Mary blushed as she added with some little embarrassment, "that is, I mean—I think it very pleasant to hear a little such conversation now and then. It shows at least that Cambridge men are not entirely engrossed with boating or mathematics."

Herbert heard the praise, and saw the blush and the embarrassment, and felt his fit come on again; he endeavoured to say that he was glad that Egerton had made such a favourable impression, but the lie almost choked him.

"Why, as for that," said Mary, "I can't make out what Bertha thinks about him, for when I asked her before you came, I could hardly get a word from her."

"Herbert knows very well," said Bertha, "that we shall always be glad to make the acquaintance of his intimate friends; but we have seen far too little of Mr. Egerton to form any opinion about him as yet."

"How can you say so, Bertha," exclaimed Mary almost indignantly. "As if such a conversation as we had on Pilgrim's Point were not at least sufficient to show that he has a truly noble nature! I believe he has more real honour than all those old knights whom you admire so much, taken together."

"At any rate he seems to have found a very warm advocate in you, Mary," said Bertha, blushing. "But you must excuse me if I do not form an opinion after a first conversation."

Oh Miss Campbell, Miss Campbell! Was that quite honest? Had you then really formed

no little private opinion of your own, and did you not feel that—that—but no, we think it would not be gentlemanly to pry any further into Miss Campbell's thoughts.

Herbert felt he had heard enough, and took up his hat to go.

"Why surely," said Mary, "you are not going already?"

"I am afraid I must," he stammered, "I—I have a headache and want some violent exercise; I mean to take a long walk, but my uncle has asked me to dinner, and I shall be here at six. Good bye till then."

Herbert walked hurriedly away. If he had but turned his head, he would have seen something standing in Mary's eye, that might perhaps have kept him longer.

"What can be the matter?" said Mary much distressed, as soon as her cousin was gone. "I cannot remember anything that either of us said that could have annoyed him. Egerton is indeed his most intimate friend, but you said nothing to disparage him, and I only praised

him! I am sure he is hurt about something, but I cannot understand it."

Herbert walked off at a pace of rather less than five miles an hour, but without either caring or even observing whither. By the middle of the day he found himself at the further extremity of Stony Combe, which he had reached by a circuit of about ten or twelve miles. He entered the ravine, and feeling fatigued by his violent exertion, sat down under the shade of a rock to rest himself. The scene around him was associated in his mind with many memories of excursions made in former years, but which now were fraught with far more pain than pleasure.

"Egerton is true," said Herbert musingly, "and Mary loves me. I can neither doubt his honour, nor her affection. But I can see that he has dazzled her imagination. First there were those conversations in London, in which she must have been much interested, or Egerton would hardly have built up such hopes upon them. And then how eagerly she listened to

every word he said on Pilgrim's Point, and how readily she adopted his views! Hitherto, she has always looked up to me, and I have done more to form her opinions than any other human being. But since she has known him, she has been completely carried away by his intellectual superiority, and I believe she already respects his judgment more than mine. Confound his enthusiasm and all the rest of it! In a very short time, and almost before she is aware of it, her admiration may become something warmer, and then her affection for me will be rather like that of a sister for a younger brother. That is not the love which would ever content me. No, I must possess her undivided allegiance, or she can never be my wife. I wish to heaven, I had never brought him here!"

After giving vent to these and similar bitter reflections, he sprang to his feet, and leant his burning forehead against the cool rock. "This will never do," he exclaimed. "I shall go mad if I indulge in thoughts like these. The future often turns out differently from our expectations,

and after all, what right have I to demand that she shall think of me otherwise than I really am? I know that I *am* inferior to Egerton in many things; but after the first effect of his more dazzling qualities has passed away, the old love of long years will return in its old force, and her heart will again acknowledge its first allegiance. But whatever happens, no low jealousy shall ever estrange me from Egerton?"

Having come to this conclusion, Herbert started on his walk home in a somewhat less miserable state of mind than he had left it. When he reacned Stonecombe, it still wanted more than an hour to dinner time, and as he did not yet feel quite equal to meeting Egerton, he determined on extending his walk to the Tower Peak. He might have been perhaps about fifty yards from its summit, when a grassy bank invited him to rest himself again after his long walk. He sat down on it, and listened to the music of the waves, as they broke in measured intervals upon the beach below. The sound had a soothing influence upon his feelings, and

helped to strengthen him in his good resolutions.

"Year after year," thought he, "aye and century after century, have the waves continued to break in regular succession on those rocks. Sometimes the wind has lashed them into greater fury, and the sea, like the life current through a giant's frame, has vented its passion in more fevered pulsations. But the storm passes away, and the waters return in a milder mood, and peace is restored between the elements that had been warring so fiercely. And during all these ages of ebb and flow, and storm and calm, human beings have wandered on the brink whose souls have been bowed down by sorrows even greater than mine. But they have died, their bodies have mingled with the dust, their souls have gone to their Creator, and no earthly record that man can read is left of their struggles and their sufferings in the day of their probation. But still there *is* a record in God's mind, and on that record must depend the place which each holds in God's Universe. How *petty* then does

each such struggle appear when considered as a mere point in the vast whole, and yet how great its importance for the individual soul! God give me strength, and I will bear myself bravely in this trial, and when the storm has passed away, a holier peace will return, and I shall look back upon the days of my agony with joy and gratitude!"

He heard a slight noise, and turning to discover its cause, saw a man lying at full length in the shadow of the tower. It was Egerton. For a few minutes he gazed at him in silence, and perceived that Egerton was quite unaware of his proximity. There was in Egerton's face an expression of calm strength, which put Herbert's philosophy to the severest proof. But he heard the steady beat of the waves upon the shore, the old sense of eternity returned upon him, and he trampled on his bitterness with an iron tread. He rose from the ground, and walked towards his friend.

"Egerton," said he, "it is odd that we should meet here for the first time by chance. I have

felt unwell this morning, and have been taking a long walk. Will you tell my father that my uncle has begged me to dine with him to-day? As there is no company, I shall not dress, and need not go home first, if you will take my message?"

"Certainly," said Egerton. "But I doubt if such long walks are the best cure for your head. I think at least you have rather overdone it to-day. Dear me! Why how late it is! I must be off at once, or I shall keep your father waiting. Give my compliments to the Miss Campbell's." With these words Egerton hastened down the path leading to the vicarage, and Herbert proceeded in the direction of the hall.

CHAPTER VII.

EVERYBODY who has been in Stonecombe for a day or two must know Dr. Freeman's. It is the dull red brick edifice, with four windows below, and four stone steps up to the front door in the middle of them, five windows in the first-floor, two garret windows like great eyes in the roof, and four poplars in front. Besides these marks of its identity there is a great brass plate on the door with *Dr. Freeman* upon it, and a little brass plate at the side, with *night bell* upon it, and a second bell without any plate at all, and which we conclude to be the day bell. But

it is not Dr. Freeman's with which we are at present concerned, except in as far as it assists us to identify the house just opposite, which has no particular characteristics beyond a single brass plate upon the door, with the inscription Mr. Walker in Roman letters, and beneath it in old English, solicitor and attorney. We had nearly forgotten to mention that this door has also two bells like the doctor's, over one of which may be read the words, also inscribed on a brass plate, "Office-bell," and over the other "House-bell."

At present we will ring at the latter, and having walked up stairs take a peep into Mr. Walker's drawing-room. It was rather a dingy looking apartment, and not entirely free from a certain musty smell of stale tobacco and gin punch combined. There was no fire in the grate as the weather was warm, but nevertheless Mr. Walker was sitting in the easy chair directly in front of it, availing himself of the hobs as a convenient support for his feet.

Mr. Walker sat gazing upon a magnificent

ornament of red and yellow paper, which covered the bars and occupied the space between the feet aforesaid. On the table at his side lay a great bundle of law papers. Taking up the first, he read the endorsement, "Release of Thistlegreen farm to John de Longoreilles, Viscount Braywell." "Ah!" soliloquised Mr. Walker, "his lordship has long had a hankering after Thistlegreen, and now he has got it. French name Longoreilles. I suppose they came over with the Conqueror. What a large family it is to be sure! I don't believe there is a county in England, in which there are not some De Longoreilles. So many of them got to be made ministers too! Let me see," he continued, taking up another bundle, "what papers are these? Deed of separation between John and Alicia Greymare. Case for opinion. Serjeant Sharpman's opinion on case."

Mr. Walker laid down the papers, and his features assumed a pensive expression. His thoughts, indeed, had begun to wander from Mr. Greymare's wrongs, and—such is the unsearch-

able nature of the human heart—were actually engaged in a little scheme for slipping his own neck into a similar noose to that from which Mr. Greymare was endeavouring to extricate his own.

"I think," soliloquized Mr. Walker, "I think I may say that figure. The whole estate, park, pleasure grounds, and farms let, say one hundred and fifteen thousand; but then there is the Scotch farm, say ten thousand. Yes, I think that is not too high a figure either; and last of all the personalty, say some three and thirty thousand, beside the Spanish, but that's not worth much. That makes, let me see, one hundred and fifty-eight thousand, of which the half is seventy-nine thousand pounds. Seventy-nine thousand at three-and-a-half per cent. all round, taking land and everything, makes £2,765 per annum English money. One hundred and fifty might, I think, be safely added by sale of this house and the business, making £2,915, call it three thousand a year, a little income on which I flatter myself Mr. and Mrs.

Walker might manage to exist with some degree of comfort."

"Mrs. Walker—Mrs. John Walker. On the 21st inst., at St. George's, Hanover Square, by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London, assisted by the Rev., &c., John Walker, Esqre, of Stonecombe, to, &c. By Jove! that will astonish Simpkins. But I shall cut him, poor fellow! And then again, a separate paragraph: 'Marriage in high life.—The blushing bride was conducted to her carriage by, &c.' No, I rather flatter myself that that will do. But I am afraid I must cut Simpkins—I am afraid I must, he is so shockingly vulgar."

Mr. Walker smiled, rose from his chair, and looked in the glass over the fire-place. He then took a small comb out of his pocket, and having combed his whiskers, perceived that a few loose ends protruded a short distance beyond that flowing curve which he considered to constitute their most striking and peculiar beauty. These he carefully snipped off, and having passed his hand through his slightly auburn locks, looked

again in the glass and smiled with such a superabundance of kindly feeling towards himself that it would have made any man feel philanthropical, simply to see it.

"My cards are good," continued Mr. Walker to himself, "but still they will require a little fine play. At present I stand well enough with the old gentleman, but somehow or other the daughter does not take to me as I could have wished. Very extraordinary! Indeed, it is *very* extraordinary! Why, what the deuce would the girl have? I know she does not care for rank, and money, and all that sort of thing; and as for good looks, I flatter myself she will not do better in that respect in a hurry. I would put it to any unprejudiced party if there is a pair of whiskers in the whole county that can hold a candle to mine? She is fond of poetry, and I thought I should make a good hit with Wordsworth and Byron, but somehow or other when I quoted them to her in the garden, it didn't tell as I had expected, for she only

laughed. Let me see. First, I gave her that thing of Wordsworth's—

> "'A violet by a mossy brim
> A yellow primrose was to him.
> But oh! the difference to me.'

That's real poetry. That's truth to nature. I should have thought a poetical sort of girl like her would have felt the beautiful simplicity of those lines, and I thought I had come out rather strong in that, oh! and regularly done the trick. But, hang it, if she didn't laugh outright! And then again, I tried it on with Byron—

> "'To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell;
> To slowly trace the forest's shady scene.
> This—this is solitude, this is to be alone.'

True again; that *is* solitude, and no mistake. Precious slow too. I hate the rocks; they knock up one's boots in less than no time. Still she only laughed at my quotations! Well, well, much may be done by constancy, perseverance, and a due attention to waistcoats.

Studs too are important; yes, I think there is a good deal in studs. Quickman seems to think more of loud shirts. What a pretty thing that was of his with blue pointers all over the front! A very neat thing,—a *very* neat thing indeed. Why, there's Freeman's carriage at his door! He's decidedly rather a swell physician for a town of this size. But then he has a private fortune. But, dear me, I must dress, for it is getting late, and I have hardly left myself time to choose my studs. Now, some men in my position would be fools enough to have a carriage to dine at the hall. I know the old gentleman better. He'd say I was giving myself airs. Yes, my dear papa-in-law, you may be very clever, but it shall not be my fault if I do not find you a son-in-law who is a trifle more wide awake still."

Saying these words, Mr. Walker chuckled with the inward satisfaction of a man at peace with himself, and with a high object before him, and then adjourned to his dressing-room.

When Herbert entered the drawing-room at

Oakwood he found his cousins alone. A glance at Mary convinced him that she was rather pale and in low spirits. She on the other hand felt that there was something wrong, and that a cloud had come between them, but she could not conceive what it was. The only thing that occurred to her was, that Herbert had felt annoyed at Bertha's remark about Egerton, and that his friendship for him was so warm, that he could not bear to hear him spoken of in any other than terms of high praise.

"I shall sit next him at dinner," she said to herself, "and I will take care that he knows what a favourable impression Mr. Egerton has made upon me. This sensitiveness about his friend is just like his warm generous nature. Bertha need not have been quite so sparing of her praise."

Mary had hardly formed this unfortunate resolution when Mr. Campbell entered the room, and was immediately followed by Mr. Walker. This gentleman was got up in a rather elaborate style, but the presence of his host exercised a

most beneficial influence over his manners. Instead of the very easy swagger which usually characterised his deportment, he was quieter and more subdued, his chief part in the conversation consisting in a respectful attention to Mr. Campbell, interspersed only with such short remarks as showed his interest in the subject under discussion. A few minutes afterwards Dr. Freeman arrived, dinner was announced, and the party repaired to the dining room.

Herbert sat next to Mary, who immediately commenced the conversation by congratulating him on possessing such a congenial friend as Egerton. She inquired into Egerton's prospects at the examination, wanted to know whether he preferred classical or mathematical studies, and in short displayed in Herbert's opinion a most uncalled for degree of interest in everything appertaining to him. Herbert was on the rack, but he remembered his good resolutions, and commanded himself sufficiently to give tolerably clear answers to Mary's interrogatories.

Dr. Freeman had taken Miss Campbell into

dinner, and sat next to her. He was a quiet gentlemanly man of about forty years of age, and appeared to be well informed on a great variety of subjects. Geology however was his great forte, and he had been endeavouring to explain to Miss Campbell some of the peculiarities of the formations in the neighbourhood of Stonecombe. It soon, however, became quite evident to him that her attention was wandering, and that she was really taking far more interest in the few chance sentences of Herbert and Mary's conversation which occasionally caught her ear. He accordingly dropped the subject, and listened to Mr. Campbell and Mr. Walker's discussion of a recent ministerial crisis.

Mr. Campbell observed that the present position of the tories was absolutely untenable; that if they did not yield with a good grace, and that soon, the people would begin to ask what was the use of a House of Lords at all, and to take the matter into their own hands. Mr. Walker expressed his entire concurrence with

these views, and submitted that the tories were alone to blame for the present crisis Mr. Campbell smiled approvingly, but added that he was by no means prepared to wish for the entire abolition of the House of Lords. Mr. Walker did not go that length either, and muttered something about great landed interests, the rights of property, and the weight and influence which it must always carry with it. But, said Mr. Campbell, the aristocracy are playing a dangerous game. Mr. Walker immediately began to tremble for the consequences to the country. Mr. Campbell thought they kept too much aloof from the people, and that intellect and character did not obtain sufficient consideration unless their possessors were willing to submit to the domination of a small and despicable clique. Here Mr. Walker's moral indignation at the petty intrigues of those in high places quite overpowered him, and in a burst of noble enthusiasm he asked why, he should like to know, why were men like Lord Botherton and Braywell to be Lord Lieutenants of counties, and a

man like his respected host to be put off with a paltry seat on the magisterial bench? Seeing Mr. Campbell wince at the last remark, he observed that nothing was farther from his intention than to insinuate that the office of county magistrate was not one of great dignity, indeed a most highly honourable one. His own profession had taught him to feel the profoundest respect for the judicial functions in whatever form they might be exercised. But still he could not help confessing candidly, that it was his opinion, that where great landed property, high personal character, and moral and religious—er—er—moral and religious respectability, and—and—in short all that sort of thing were united in so high a degree in the same party, that that party ought to be called to the House of Lords and made a Lord Lieutenant at once, or else er-er, or else er-er, the county must inevitably go to the dogs. He hoped Mr. Campbell would excuse his excitement, but he felt strongly, and where he felt strongly, he could not help speaking strongly. It was his weakness, but it was

an amiable weakness, and one that he should never feel ashamed of.

As Mr. Walker concluded his speech, he looked round the table in the hope of perceiving that his eloquence had been fully appreciated. His eyes were glowing with generous enthusiasm, when they suddenly observed a peculiarly equivocal expression in the corresponding feature of Dr. Freeman—an expression which had a slightly damping effect on his ardent and excited feelings. The same organs were then directed towards Miss Campbell, but without affording him much more satisfaction, for there was a little smile about both eyes and mouth which seemed to indicate a want of sympathy with his elevated sentiments. He began to feel embarrassed, and was reflecting in what manner he had committed himself, when to his great relief the ladies rose and left the room. The expression on Mr. Campbell's countenance was that of a man whose feelings have been gratified against his will. Mr. Walker perceived this, and thought that if he regarded the father's and daughter's as a joint

account, the general balance on the whole transaction would still be a little in his favour.

"Help yourself, Herbert, and pass the wine," said Mr. Campbell.

When Dr. Freeman saw his host refill his own glass, he elevated his eyebrows, and shook his head with a medical deprecatory smile.

"I tell you, doctor," said Mr. Campbell, "you don't know my constitution, you don't indeed. I don't take much, but I must have my quantum of port every day. Besides, this is such an old wine, it could not do anybody any harm. Why I bottled this port the same year my eldest daughter was born."

"Dear me," said Mr. Walker, "well, that is very interesting. I must have another glass. It is really though a beautiful wine, and like its twin sister has not lost its colour. Ha, ha, ha! has not lost its colour! And did you really, Mr. Campbell, bottle this wine the same year that Bertha was born?"

Mr. Campbell looked rather hard at Mr. Walker, and said in a peculiarly clear voice:

"I bottled this wine, sir, in the same year that *Miss Campbell* was born."

"Oh—ah,—I beg your pardon—yes,—meant to say—same year as Miss Campbell," stammered Mr. Walker, turning rather red.

He felt that this time, even as a joint account, the balance would be decidedly against him. As the safest mode of retreat he sank into a state of temporary annihilation, out of which he did not emerge until the gentlemen left the dining-room; unless perhaps the consumption of a considerable portion of preserved ginger may be regarded as evincing a slight interimistic hold on a mundane existence.

CHAPTER VIII.

SHORTLY after dinner the whole party adjourned to the garden. Here they found Mr. Edward Campbell and Egerton, who had walked over from the vicarage with the intention of drinking tea at the Hall. Mr. Campbell had a little business to discuss with Mr. Walker, as he was in negociation for the exchange of some of his own land, for a couple of fields belonging to a neighbour, which from their situation would be a valuable addition to one of his farms. The Vicar gave Dr. Freeman a wink, and carried him off at the first possible opportunity for a

little private conversation. Bertha and Mary strolled down the willow walk, accompanied by Egerton and Herbert, but they did not keep together long, for Herbert and Mary walked on before, and Egerton and Miss Campbell almost unconsciously turned off into another part of the shrubbery, called the labyrinth.

"I am afraid that Herbert is not well," said Miss Campbell, "he looks so wretchedly pale."

"I have thought so too," replied Egerton, "and to-day there was something so peculiar about his manner, I mean, he seemed so depressed, that I felt it was only right to call his father's attention to it, and accordingly at dinner I threw out a little hint to that effect. Mr. Edward Campbell took the alarm instantly, and was so impatient to see Dr. Freeman, that he proposed that we should lose no time, but walk over here this evening. I cannot think there is any real ground for anxiety; but I believe he must give up reading for a short time. Mr. Edward Campbell is speaking to Dr. Freeman about him

now, but in my opinion no other treatment would do him so much good as the substitution of a course of novels and poetry for optics and astronomy."

"I have no doubt that you are right, and that his present nervous irritable state has been produced by too hard reading. He told us this morning that he had not slept last night."

"And then," said Egerton, "he has been walking almost all day. I should hardly think such excessive exercise can be good for him. I shall be curious to hear what Dr. Freeman says, but I have most faith in a course of light reading. He is very fond of poetry."

"I suppose at Cambridge, Mr. Egerton, you have not much time for such reading?"

"Properly speaking, I have not, but I take it. Mathematics alone would make a man a complete mummy, or perhaps something rather drier. After reading till eleven o'clock, I allow myself half-an-hour or so for Wordsworth or Tennyson, or sometimes Byron, though I am not one of his very devoted admirers."

"But surely he wrote some of the finest poetry that has appeared in this century?"

"Well, I suppose he did, and I admire a good deal of it; but still I dislike Byronism so much, that I cannot bring my mind into that sympathy with the man, which is necessary for the full enjoyment of his works."

"What do you understand by Byronism?"

"It may seem rather hard to give a man's name to a great defect, but there is so much Byronism in Byron, that I believe it is quite fair in his case. I would define it as egotism, masquerading in picturesque costumes. However, the same thing in all essentials is manifesting itself in a new form at the present day. Have you read Balder?"

"No, not yet."

"It contains some fine poetry, but I believe that Balderism is only a kind of intellectual Byronism. The author, who is a poet of most undoubted genius, makes his hero, who is also a poet, talk of his doings and his aspirations in a bombastic strain of self-worship, which I should

hope would only inspire a feeling of disgust in any reverent mind. It is true, the author tells us in the preface that his hero is intended for a warning and not for a model. But still the fact that he *is* his hero, shews that this grandiloquent gentleman is intended to inspire the reader with interest, and not with the contempt which such self-exaggeration alone deserves. A degree of conceit which hovers on the verge of mental disease, does not become respectable because it assumes an intellectual form; and when a young author of nine and twenty rants in his study about becoming a king of men and begetting a better world, he should be recommended to the care of his friends, not made a picturesque hero. In reality he *is* only a fit object of pity, and it is a prostitution of poetry to endeavour to make him *seem* otherwise." *

* For the credit of his own judgment, the author would observe, that although he shares the opinions expressed by Egerton on the subject of certain parts of Balder, he is by no means blind to the great genius it displays, or to the high rank which is justly due to an earlier work by the same poet. The Roman may have many defects as a drama, but it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a poem in the whole range of modern English literature, containing more noble thought and beautiful imagery expressed in the richest poetic diction.

After a short pause Egerton proceeded, "to my mind all this Byronic exaltation is the opposite pole of genuine enthusiasm; perhaps I might call it enthusiasm with the wrong side outwards. Enthusiasm in the high and true sense of the word, is unselfishness at passion heat; it is the utter forgetfulness of self in its intense devotion to noble objects. Self becomes nothing, and the object becomes all. Now in this modern form of Byronism, as in Byronism generally, the intensity of the passion is turned inwards upon self, and outward objects are valuable to it chiefly in so far as they can be made serviceable to this self-idolatry."

"But the enthusiasm of the hero of the poet you mention," said Miss Campbell, "was directed to a great object *out* of himself. He talks of becoming a king of men, and begetting a better world."

"He does so," replied Egerton; "but I think the mere phrase shews that the young gentleman was on his knees before his own all-comprehending genius. Depend upon it, those minds which

are capable of performing any part of the task he sets himself, are far too much impressed with its greatness, in comparison with their own powers, to talk in such a vain-glorious style. Great action demands some estimate of its sphere on the part of the actor, and a mere approximation to such estimate will inspire a feeling of reverence and awe. When a man thinks he can lord it in the world, either of thought or action, as the cleverest school-boy may perhaps succeed in doing in a very juvenile debating society, he has evidently formed an estimate of his own powers, which would be very ludicrous if it were not very sad. That reminds me of a freshman at Cambridge, who belonged to a small literary and debating society, of which I was also a member. On one occasion he had to read a paper on a subject chosen by himself, and the title of it was, 'The Philosophy of Kant briefly refuted.' The title was enough for me. I knew he could not understand two words of his subject, or he would not have talked of the brief refutation of the profoundest thinker the world has

seen since Aristotle. I acccordingly stayed away, and saved my time and temper; but I afterwards heard from a friend who had been present that the paper was decidedly amusing, though Kant was not absolutely annihilated."

"To return to what you said on enthusiasm," said Miss Campbell, "I think the definition a true one; but still it seems to me that there may be great unselfishness without it."

"Certainly," said Egerton. "I think there are many temperaments in which great unselfishness does not assume such an ardent, passionate form, but still it is essentially the same thing. Herbert, for instance, is unselfish in a very high degree, but his unselfishness rarely warms to that fever-heat which we consider necessary to constitute enthusiasm. He appears to take as much interest in the weal and woe of all the poor in Stonecombe as the Vicar himself; and I much doubt if the kindly sympathy of the son is not often productive of as much good as the sermons of the father."

"Do you think, then, Mr. Egerton," said Miss

Campbell, "that visiting among the poor is so very useful? I have often feared that the great difference in education and other circumstances makes the rich incapable of entering sufficiently into the thoughts and feelings of their poorer neighbours to allow of their influence being as beneficial as is often imagined."

"I believe," replied Egerton, "that everything depends upon the spirit in which the rich man offers his consolation or advice. If he go to the poor man with the consciousness of his superiority the predominant feeling in his mind on the one hand, or with an affected forgetfulness of it on the other, there will always be a vast gulf between them, and his aid will be a purely material one, and no more. Lady Bountiful distributions of soup and blankets are all very well in their way, and may sometimes relieve much physical evil; but this feudal form of charity is not charity in the highest sense. The charity which is felt by the recipient to depend on the relations between man and man arising from their common humanity, will always have a far more

beneficial effect than that arising from the relations of rich and poor—of lord and dependent. The great barrier to a beneficial intercourse between rich and poor, which arises from external circumstances, will soon give way, when the poor man feels that humanity, and not social superiority, is the predominant feeling in the mind of his benefactor."

Bertha was silent. After a few minutes Egerton proceeded:

"I hope you will pardon me for saying so, Miss Campbell, but when I consider the great interest she takes in the poor and the schools of Stonecombe, and the quiet earnestness with which she devotes herself to making others happy, I think your sister offers in her own person a striking instance of great unselfishness without perhaps much enthusiasm."

Little did Egerton imagine, as he uttered these words, the influence which the recollection of them was destined to exercise on one of the most important decisions of his life.

CHAPTER IX.

THE preparations for tea had been made in the garden. As Mr. Campbell had so recently been an invalid, Dr. Freeman had strongly urged that he should not expose himself to the evening air. When Mary heard the doctor's advice, she was going to order the whole tea equipage to be taken into the house again. But this her father would not allow for a moment, observing that he should be quite satisfied with his brother's company, and that he did not wish to interfere with the pleasure of the young people. Mr. Walker had given his client a very satisfactory

account of his negociations respecting Deadman's close and the seventeen acres, and flattered himself he had recovered the ground he had lost by his unfortunate remark at the desert. He was accordingly in rather better spirits than at the commencement of his interview with the father, and hoped that the tea-table might afford him some opportunity of making up his leeway with the daughter.

"Dear me!" said that gentleman, as he entered the summer-house and found the rest of the party assembled round the tea-table. "Dear me! This is really delightful! There is something so exquisitely rustic in drinking tea out of doors, that that delicious beverage, which in the words of Shakespeare, 'cheers not, but inebriates,' has for an ardent lover of nature like myself, a double relish under the blue vault of heaven, that is,—I mean,—in a summer-house."

A very little laugh was heard, but was immediately suppressed. Mr. Walker looked up, and seeing Miss Campbell preternaturally grave, felt

convinced that she was the offending party. "I do believe she is laughing at me again," thought he to himself. "Really, this is rather disagreeable. They are all in a conspiracy, to put me down. But I will be easy in spite of them all,—that puppy, Egerton, into the bargain."

"I quite agree with Mr. Walker," said Egerton. "I think drinking tea out of doors is extremely pleasant in summer time."

"I am delighted to find you are of the same opinion, Mr. Egerton," said Mr. Walker, feeling slightly encouraged. "Tea, indeed, under any circumstances, is the most social meal. It casts a rich halo of genial feeling around all the domestic relations. It makes a man open his heart to—to—to—"

"To his father and mother," suggested Dr. Freeman, gravely.

"His uncles and aunts," added Herbert.

"His brothers and sisters," said Dr. Freeman.

"And cousins," continued Herbert.

"Ha, ha, ha, very good!" said Mr. Walker, who had not been prepared for this immediate

illustration of his theory. "But, seriously speaking, it makes even the grave relax,—and, —and it is quite right they should, Miss Campbell, quite right. We cannot be always wise, you know."

"There is great truth in that," said Herbert, "great truth. *Dulce est desipere in loco.*"

Mr. Walker felt misgivings; but he smiled and bowed, as being the safer course.

"You should translate that for us, Herbert?" said Miss Campbell. "Mary and I do not understand Latin."

"Mr. Walker is very fond of the classics," said Mary demurely. "Perhaps he will be so kind as to translate it for us."

"Oh, I? Certainly—most happy. The classics are a noble study; I enjoy them beyond measure. But dear me! what a very beautiful evening it is; I wonder when the moon rises."

"I really do not know, Mr. Walker: but you are forgetting the translation."

"The translation? Ah, yes—the translation. Let me see. *Dulce est*, it is sweet; *desipere*,

to—to—what should you consider the best mode of rendering that beautiful expression, Mr. Egerton?"

"To sip tea," prompted Herbert, in a low voice.

"Ah, yes. *Desipere*, to sip tea; *in loco*, in such a place," said Mr. Walker, falling unconsciously into the pitfall which Herbert had laid for him. "A fine thought—a very fine thought."

"Exquisite," said Dr. Freeman, a little ambiguously.

"Ah, Miss Campbell," continued Mr. Walker, "the classics are a fine resource for a man engaged like myself in legal pursuits. Really, I do not think my health could stand the wear and tear of my professional avocations, if it were not for the many delightful evenings I pass with the great minds of old. My occupations are often harassing to the feelings, but duty and intellectual resources carry a man through a great deal. After having taken a party's instructions for a will, and mingled my tears with the party's

expectant widow, I have found a relief to my spirits and a solace to my over-sensitive nature in classical pursuits, which I have never been able to derive in an equal degree from the severer studies of mathematical and scientific investigation."

Perhaps Egerton and Herbert had taken a chill from the evening air and caught cold. At any rate they had both been blowing their noses with an unusual degree of energy during Mr. Walker's remarks. At the conclusion of them, however, Herbert came out with a species of explosion, which was immediately succeeded by a second from Egerton, and a third from Dr. Freeman. The Miss Campbells were both engaged in examining with great interest the tea leaves left at the bottom of their cups, probably in the hopes of discovering a journey, a coffin, a sweetheart, or some similar vaticinational object.

Mr. Walker's complexion assumed a deeper hue. Had any gentleman with a leaning towards speculative investments proposed to Mr. Walker at this moment to give him five thousand pounds

—say five thousand pounds—two thousand five hundred down, and two thousand five hundred in good bills on a respectable house at three months, for his chance of the seventy-nine thousand pounds, Spanish included, we are disposed to believe that he would have closed with such party at once. At the same time we make this statement without prejudice, and are not disposed to take upon ourselves the slightest responsibility.

For one fact, however, we are ready to engage, namely, that Mr. Walker did not regard any of the company present with a very loving eye, but cast around him a most corsairian scowl. Some symptoms of inward merriment were still visible on the expression of Egerton's face, for which, however, Mr. Walker did not feel prepared to call that gentleman to account. Another fact of some interest for the psychologist may also be accepted as historical. Two minutes had hardly elapsed after Mr. Walker had made his last remark to Herbert, when by a most unaccountable coincidence every other

person present remembered some slightly humorous incident that had occurred to him or her respectively within the last few days, and at the recollection of which they now laughed heartily. Mr. Walker was the only individual who did not enter into the spirit of the joke, and finding his situation become painful, he pleaded business, wished the ladies good evening, and bowing to the gentlemen with a majestic glare, stalked slowly away.

Soon after Mr. Walker's discomfiture and retreat, it was considered advisable to return to the house, as Mary was always very susceptible of cold, and had only lately recovered from one. Egerton was introduced to Mr. Campbell, who received him with somewhat formal politeness, and enquired after Sir Roderick. Egerton replied that his father had not been very well for some time, and that that was the reason he had not attended the last quarter sessions, but that his physician had given it as his opinion that there was no serious cause for alarm.

"I hear," said Mr. Campbell smiling, "that

you Tories have already commenced an active canvass for the coming election. Do you count on bringing in your man? We hope to run you pretty hard, at any rate."

"I really do not know what my father thinks about it," replied Egerton, "for as our opinions on politics differ rather widely, the subject is not much discussed between us. I believe, though, that the Tories are tolerably active, and that they are quite prepared for a stiff contest."

"So you are not a Tory, Mr. Egerton!" said Mr. Campbell, with undisguised surprise. "May I ask what your politics are?"

"I do not call myself anything at present," said Egerton, "because I wish to have a little more time for reflection before I attach myself to any party. At the same time I do not hesitate to say that my leanings are to the Radicals rather than to the Whigs."

"I am glad to hear it, very glad to hear it," replied Mr. Campbell. "I should never feel disposed to quarrel with a man for being a little more liberal than myself; but how the Tories

can fail to see that their time is gone by is quite beyond my powers of comprehension."

"Very extraordinary," thought Mr. Campbell to himself. "The son of a Tory baronet of old family, with a very good prospect of coming into the title, and yet he actually talks of joining the Radicals! I wonder for my part that Sir Roderick has allowed it. If I had had a son, he never should have dreamt of joining the Tories—I know that. I can't understand it."

Mr. Campbell then asked Egerton several questions about the university, as also his own studies there, and concluded by hoping that he and Herbert would dine with him some day soon. His manner had quite lost its first formality, and several times in the course of conversation, Egerton observed Mr. Campbell looking at him with a peculiar expression, in which kindness and melancholy were strangely blended, and for which he could not account.

"Let me see," said Mr. Campbell; "to-day

is Wednesday; to-morrow I am from home. Saturday;—suppose we say Monday?"

Neither Egerton nor Herbert had any particular engagement for that day, and Monday was accordingly fixed upon.

"And now, Mr. Egerton, I hope you will excuse me if I leave you. The fact is, I have a little business to talk over with my brother, and in my present state of health I am obliged to keep rather early hours. Good night. I hope I shall often have the pleasure of seeing you at Oakwood during your stay at the Vicarage; and mind you don't forget Monday, at half-past six o'clock. By the way, are you fond of archery? Suppose you come over to luncheon, and then you and Herbert can have a bout of it before dinner. It requires a good light, and after dinner there is hardly time enough before the darkness sets in."

Egerton gladly accepted the invitation, and Mr. Campbell retired to his study.

Egerton walked towards the piano, and took up some music.

"I see that you sing, Miss Campbell," he said; "would you be so kind as to give us a little music?"

"With great pleasure. Mary, will you sing something with me?"

Mary excused herself on the ground that she had not quite recovered her voice since her late cold.

Egerton opened the piano. Miss Campbell sat down to it, and sang two or three songs in a rich contralto voice. Egerton sat at a little distance and listened with all his soul. When he heard the full deep notes come welling forth, and read in her large dark eyes the utter abandonment to the thought and to the feeling to which she was giving such harmonious expression, her beauty seemed to him still grander than before, and the old sense of awe with which he had first gazed on it returned in yet greater force. This time, however, though his perception of the inner harmony of soul and feature was more vivid, and his admiration more profound, it was no longer accompanied by that

almost schoolboy sense of prostration, which had more affinity to idol worship than to love.

There was nothing of the coxcomb in Egerton, and the effect he might produce on the other sex was the last subject that would occupy his thoughts. But short as their intercourse had been, the stronger intellect and the firmer will had made themselves felt, and though it had assumed no definite form, there was a certain consciousness of a power of resistance, of a power of self-assertion, which placed his relations towards Miss Campbell, on a more manly, and therefore a more natural footing than at first.

The last notes had died away, but Egerton had neither moved nor spoken. At length he went to the piano, and taking up the song that Miss Campbell had just been singing, said in a low voice, "Thank you, it was very beautiful. I never felt the whole meaning of that song before." The words were simple, and might have passed as the mere formal acknowledgment required by good manners, and the custom of society, but there must have been something

in Egerton's manner that struck her ear differently. She looked up at his face, and their eyes met. It was but for an instant, for she immediately averted hers, and perhaps to conceal the blush that she could not quite suppress, began to turn over the leaves of the music book with nervous haste.

"Are you an admirer of Meyerbeer?" said Miss Campbell, placing one of the works of that composer before her.

In spite of all her self-command, there was a slight tremour in her voice, which went to Egerton's heart, and made him for a moment unable to direct his thoughts to the meaning of the question.

Soon recovering himself, however, he replied, "Meyerbeer! Oh yes, certainly, I think him the greatest composer living. I see you have the music of the Prophête. Would you be so kind as to play the march?"

Miss Campbell complied.

"Of all the operas I have ever seen or heard," said Egerton, as soon as she had finished, "the

Prophête speaks to me most powerfully. I must confess the first time I heard it, my eyes were too much occupied with the spectacle, to allow of my fully appreciating the music, and I went home only half satisfied. But I have often heard it since, and each time with a profounder conviction of its extraordinary depth and originality. I rank it above all other operas. The fourth act is perhaps the most wonderful combination of effective situation, grand music, and splendid spectacle, that the stage has ever known. What is particularly striking in the coronation scene, is this: that although the decoration and costume are so magnificent, their effect on the spectator fades into nothing, and is almost forgotten in the thrilling interest of the action, and surpassing grandeur of the music. I mention the fourth act, because its merits are the most obvious. But to my mind the great merit of that opera is the deep thought that pervades the whole of it."

"I am glad to find you like it so much," said Miss Campbell, "for Mary and I cannot agree

on that subject. I have often heard it severely criticised; indeed, it seemed at one time to be the fashion, but for my own part I admire it extremely. Even Mary, however, admires the music of the fourth act."

"What does even Mary do?" said that young lady from the other end of the room.

"I was telling Mr. Egerton of your heresy about the Prophête, Mary, but that you partially redeemed it by admiring the fourth act."

"I dare say the rest of it may be very sublime," said Mary, "but I cannot understand it."

"The moment of composing such music as that march," said Egerton, "must be a grand one. In addition to the idea in itself, there must be the consciousness of its being a fresh creation; I mean the consciousness that it is the first time that the same idea has presented itself to a human mind."

"I can hardly conceive a grander," said Miss Campbell.

"Oh, Bertha, I can," said Mary. "Can't you, Herbert?"

"Well," said Herbert, "I think I can conceive one of more intense happiness."

"I think I can conceive a much greater moment," said Egerton.

"Upon second thoughts I believe I must retract," said Miss Campbell smiling, "but still the moment of a beautiful poetic creation must be a glorious one, whether its vehicle be music or language."

"I have a capital idea," said Mary laughing. "Suppose we each write down on a slip of paper what we conceive to be one of the grandest moments of existence. We will then decide in solemn conclave whose idea is the best, and he or she, as the case may be, shall determine the punishment for the worst."

Perhaps Egerton and Miss Campbell might have preferred the conversation not taking this general turn, but they made no objection to Mary's proposition. Paper was accordingly pro-

cured, and in a few minutes four slips were folded up and laid upon the table.

"Now, Herbert," said Mary, "please to read them for the public benefit."

Herbert opened the first paper, and read as follows:

"The moment in which a man of wealth has conceived the idea of a vast charitable institution for the benefit of a large class of sufferers, and determines on founding it."

"That is Mary's," said Miss Campbell, "I am quite sure of that."

"Now Herbert," said Mary, "read the next."

Herbert read as follows:

"The moment in which a man completes a great scientific work, such as Newton's Principia, or a grand poem, such as Paradise Lost."

"That's Bertha," said Mary, laughing. "I could have guessed Bertha's idea beforehand."

Herbert took a third slip, and read:

"The moment in which a man becomes convinced of the affection of the woman he loves."

The ladies smiled, but said nothing.

Herbert blushed, and proceeded to read the fourth:

"The moment in which a general has gained a great victory in a noble cause."

There was a short silence. At last Mary said:

"Well, who will decide? Will nobody make a speech? I suppose I must not give my vote for my philantbropist, and then I doubt between the philosopher and the general."

Herbert's face was crimson.

"I think," said Miss Campbell, "the lover's moment is too purely personal to be considered great; and the charitable gentleman's institution though very unselfish, is hardly of sufficient breadth to be so grand as the other moments. I vote for the general."

"Well, Herbert, what do you say?" said Egerton.

"Oh, I don't know. I think I vote for the philosopher."

"Well," said Egerton, laughing, "I suppose it is very improper, but I must stick to my own

idea, and vote for the general. My reason is, that although the poet's creation and the philosopher's discoveries partially involve a high *morale*, yet are they principally to be considered as conquests in the field of the intellect. The general, on the other hand, has also effected his conquest by the exercise of a commanding intellect; but, besides this, it is a moral act on the grandest scale that comes within the reach of human powers. He has risked life, liberty, and all that is dear to him, has taken, moreover, a similar responsibility for thousands of others, in order to write his protest against tyranny and injustice on the record of ages—on the future history of the world. It is very ungallant, I am afraid, but still I must vote for my victorious general."

"The general has it," said Mary, "and the lover is in the minority. And now, oh, judge! what is the lover to do to expiate his sins?"

"To write a love story," said Egerton, laughing. "Let me see, what shall it be?

Suppose we say 'The Legend of Pilgrim's Point.'"

At this moment Mr. Edward Campbell entered the room, and proposed that they should go home at once, as it was already late. He was followed into the hall by Egerton. Herbert had felt much vexed at the sorry part he had played in the previous conversation, and could not conceal his annoyance. Mary saw that he was hurt, and was surprised that he should have taken his discomfiture so much to heart. Just as he was following his father into the hall, she came behind him, and gently laying her hand on his arm, repeated his name in a low tone. He turned round quickly and saw a tear in her eye.

"Herbert," she said, "I hope you are not hurt by our jest. You know it *was* only a jest; and I can almost believe after all that you are right, and that there *is* no happier moment than that you chose, and that the certainty of the return of love is the greatest bliss on earth."

"If you had only believed it quite," said

Herbert, bitterly, "I think you would have spared me much pain to day." Then seeing how deeply she felt his tone, he added, quickly, "but forgive me, Mary, I am but a presumptuous fool, and know how much too good you are for one so far your inferior."

"Why, you have not got your great coat yet," said the Vicar, re-appearing at the door. "Egerton and I are ready. He has gone outside to light a cigar. A bad habit, a bad habit! Very few men smoked in my time. Good night, Bertha! Good night, Mary! God bless you both! Give me a kiss, Mary. I consider that I have a peculiar right to one to night; though you don't know why. Never mind, you'll know some day. God bless you!"

As soon as the gentlemen had left the house, Bertha wished her sister good night, and retired to her room. Being tolerably independent as far as all matters appertaining to the toilet are concerned, and wishing nothing more than to be alone, she at once dismissed her maid to bed. A few minutes afterwards she missed her pocket

handkerchief, and believing she knew the exact spot by the piano, where she must have left it, she did not take a candle with her, but stole quietly down stairs in the dark, to fetch it. The truant handkerchief was soon found, and she was on the point of leaving the room, when a sound something like a sob, caught her ear. She started, and looking in the direction from which it appeared to proceed, saw Mary leaning back in a large fauteuil near the window. Her head was bowed upon her bosom, and she had her hands up to her face, but they did not conceal the whole of it, and Bertha could see the deathlike paleness of her cheek,—a paleness which looked yet more ghastly in the bright moonbeams which streamed in through the window, throwing the dark shade of its broad mullions on the rich carpet below.

"Why, Mary," said Bertha, much distressed, "what *is* the matter? I thought you had gone to bed, and now I find you here all alone,—and crying too! What can have happened, dear, to make you so wretched?"

"Oh, Bertha!" said Mary, sobbing, "I am indeed unhappy. You know that Herbert used to like me, and I used to like him, and that perhaps at some future time,—but—you know what I mean. And I had looked forward with so much pleasure to seeing him again this long vacation, and now he has come, I am so very, very miserable!" And Mary sobbed as if her heart would break.

"But what is it all about, dear? Have you had any quarrel with him?"

"No, no, not that," said Mary; "but you remember when he came here this morning how ill he looked, and how suddenly he walked away —almost angrily. And then I thought he had been displeased because you did not seem to admire Mr. Egerton so much as he expected, and so I talked about him at dinner; but nothing would do, I could not remove his gloom. At tea, it is true, he laughed at Mr. Walker, and I thought at first that he was happy again; but after we came in, and while you were singing, he seemed so cold and stiff in his manner, not

at all like the old times. Oh, dear! what have I done?—what have I done? I do love him so dearly, Bertha. And then I made a great effort to be merry, and cheer him up, and so proposed our writing the slips of paper. But then we settled that his idea was the least grand moment, and he seemed so vexed. Oh, how I wish I had never thought of it! I am sure I had no idea he would have taken it so much to heart, but I could not vote for him, because I really did not think so. Could I, Bertha? And just now, when he went away, I spoke to him, and tried to put it right between us, but he answered so bitterly, and said I had hurt his feelings. God knows I would rather cut off my right hand than give him one moment's pain. Oh, I am so very unhappy!"

"I am sure, dear Mary," said Bertha, "you look on it in much too serious a light. I have seen as well as you that Herbert is out of spirits, but I feel no doubt that it is nothing more than that he is not quite well. He has been working too hard for his degree, but after a little idleness

and fresh sea air, he will get quite well and merry again, and be the old Herbert he always was."

"But what could he have meant," said Mary, "by my having given him pain to day?"

"Depend upon it, Mary, it was nothing but a little irritability arising from over-strained nerves that made him regard some little wee molehill as a great mountain. In a few days he will be well again, and angry with himself for having been so foolish, and then you will forgive him, and all will be the same as before. Now, Mary, do go to bed, and don't cry, love, but try and believe what I say. Will you? Things look sometimes so differently in the morning to what they did the night before."

And Mary was comforted, and wiped away her tears, and the two sisters glided like ghosts in the pale moonlight, up the broad staircase, and through the long corridor, and vanished into their respective rooms.

"Poor Mary," said Bertha to herself as she closed the door of her room. "I hope and

trust my consolation may prove true. I gave it in perfect good faith. I think Herbert is of far too generous a nature to harbour anything like a petty jealousy at his friend's great superiority, for otherwise, indeed, his annoyance at the preference we gave to the idea of the general did look something like it. But his depression had shewn itself before, and then Mr. Egerton is his dearest friend. It would, indeed, be curious if Mary also came within the sphere of this new, this strange influence. Three days ago, I had never seen him, and in this short time he seems to have assumed a complete mastery over all my opinions, and so quietly, as if it had always been his birthright. Herbert is much cleverer than I am, but I have often differed with him and maintained my own views, and even afterwards have believed myself to have been right. But with his friend—how different! I may try to take the highest view I can—indeed, I feel as if his very presence raised me to a higher sphere—but all is of no avail. His thought comes sweeping down on mine as if from some loftier

height, aud I can only listen and yield. I neither *can* resist, nor do I feel the wish to do so. And then his very enthusiasm is so different from that of others. There is so little feverish passion in it—it is all undoubting conviction and calm strength; and with the man's strength there is almost a woman's gentleness. It is indeed a privilege to learn of such a master, and were I doomed never to see him again, I feel as if I should still live a better life even for those few bright hours."

Ah, Bertha! It was not the mere lesson itself that had struck so deep a chord in thy maiden's heart, but rather the tone of the master that gave it. Thoughts, slight in themselves, acquire a tenfold meaning, when they seem but the casual utterance of a richer spirit,—when they tell of far more that lies behind potentially, though unexpressed in words.

When Bertha sat before her glass that night, and saw her long dark hair come streaming down in its glossy waves on each side of her face, she felt a joy she had never known before,

—a woman's pride in her own loveliness. And the thought raised a burning blush, and heightened the beauty, and when she lay down to rest, it was with a peaceful hope to which she would not for worlds have given utterance, no, not even in the solitude of that fair sanctuary.

And was the hope a groundless one? A glance at another chamber may perhaps enable the reader to judge for himself.

As soon as Egerton was alone that night, he threw himself on a chair, and sank into a deep reverie.

"If I could win her," said he at length, "I feel as if my power for good would be increased tenfold. God can give a man no greater blessing than a wife who enters into all his higher aspirations, who strengthens him in what is noble by her sympathy, and purifies him from all alloy of coarser feeling, by her tender womanly love. It is not what she has said that makes me worship her, for that has been comparatively little. But it is, because I feel that I can speak to her of things that I should feel it like sacrilege

to speak of to any other woman, and because I read in her face the deep sympathy of her noble soul, in all that is good and great.

"With the heart at rest, as mine would be, were she to become my wife, my intellect would gain fresh strength; and no man is fit for his highest work, unless both head and heart are in unison, —both equally engaged in the problem of his life. And as for herself, if I can only gain her love, I think I can keep it. I think I could make her happy.

"But then there are others to be considered. What my own father would say is doubtful, but I have long determined that no human being shall influence my conduct against my own feelings and convictions in the most important action of my life. What *her* father would say, is another question. Wealth and rank are sure to be mine. Oh God! to think that even for a moment, I should have dwelt with less pain on the loss that will make them so! Heaven forgive me the cursed thought. It's too terrible!"

But Egerton had wronged himself. The re-

collection that his brother's death might remove difficulties in the way of obtaining the hand of the woman he loved, had been mistaken by an over sensitive conscience for the wish that they might be so removed. But never had his soul been really sullied by such a feeling, and never had he prayed that his brother's life might yet be spared, with greater fervour and sincerity than on that night.

CHAPTER X.

MARY was far more active than her elder sister in visiting the poor of Stonecombe, and teaching at the Schools. This was partly owing to her having less decided intellectual tastes, and thus more time at her disposal, but partly also to something in Bertha's character, which made it more difficult for her to enter into friendly intercourse with persons far below her in refinement. Whenever Mary wanted money for any of her charitable projects, she knew that she could count on Bertha's purse, as surely as on her own. But there was a certain natural dignity of manner about Miss Campbell, which, in spite of

all the genuine goodness of her heart, made the poor feel less at their ease with her than with Mary, and therefore less inclined to confide to her their sorrows and their joys. It was for this reason that Bertha had almost entirely resigned the parochial visiting to her younger sister, whose little expeditions into Stonecombe were therefore made alone.

Under these circumstances it was not unnatural that Mary felt a little surprised when on the morning after the events recorded in the last chapter her sister offered to accompany her in her round of visits.

"But I am not going near Dowling's, Bertha," said Mary, "and shall probably stay at least half-an-hour with old Mrs. Fothergill, who, as I imagine, is no great favorite of yours."

"I don't want to buy anything at Dowling's, Mary, nor shall I at all object to staying even longer at Mrs. Fothergill's, if you wish it. The fact is, it weighs rather heavily on my conscience that I have neglected Stonecombe so much lately, and I wish to renew my acquaintance with all

the poor people there. Indeed I mean to take a class again at the Sunday school; at least if you will give me one."

"I am so glad, Bertha; to be quite honest, I have wished sometimes that you would help me more in these things, but I knew you cared so much for your reading and your drawing, that I did not like to teaze you about what seemed to interest you so much less."

"I wish you had told me so before," replied Bertha. "But I begin to see that I have been wrong in leaving it all to you, and I mean from henceforth to turn over a new leaf. So let us go at once."

From this time Bertha might be seen as often among the poor at Stonecombe, as her sister. Whether her manner towards them had become gentler and more subdued, or whether more frequent intercourse enabled her to enter more completely into their feelings, we cannot say. But the fact is certain, that she soon obtained their confidence in as great a degree as Mary had ever possessed it, and the stiff respect with which

she had formerly been regarded, soon gave place to a far more kindly feeling. In many cases indeed her visits were even more welcome.

For as she possessed more practical sense than her sister, she was often able to offer valuable advice at the instant, where Mary would have been quite at a loss, and could only have had recourse to her uncle or to Herbert.

Egerton found the next two days pass rather heavily, not however from any want of occupation or amusement, but because he was particularly anxious for the arrival of Sunday. He read mathematics each morning till luncheon time, then rode or walked with Herbert till dinner, and spent the evenings in conversation with the Vicar. We have said that he read each morning, but this reading was rather theoretical, or problematical in a different sense to which those words might perhaps be understood of mathematical studies. Even the prettiest problems and most elegant bookwork seemed to have lost for him some of their interest, and he frequently found it necessary

to refresh himself with looking out of the window for a few minutes, probably for the sake of the fresh air. It may also be recorded that on these occasions his eyes generally sought out a certain grey turret, half hidden by the trees, to which he seemed to attach a peculiar interest. Once, indeed, when engaged in this manner, he rushed hastily from the window, searched for a small telescope in one of his drawers, and immediately directed it towards a single figure crossing a bright green sunny lawn near the turret above mentioned. After a short observation he satisfied himself that a servant was carrying a sort of wooden machine, something like an easel.

"What is the man going to do?" thought he. "Is he an æsthetic footman pursuing art under difficulties, and intending to make a study of those old oaks?"

Having planted the machine in question, the servant walked away, and soon returned with the canvass to place upon it. But instead of its presenting a white surface ready for

the reception of tall Thomas's inspirations, it presented a series of concentric circles painted in all the colours of the rainbow.

"It is a target," thought Egerton, "and a target leads to the supposition that archers will soon appear."

Egerton swept the open glade with his telescope for a few minutes, apparently with almost as much interest as if he had been the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo expecting the arrival of the Prussians. At last a fair Diana appeared with one of her nymphs, and the practice began. Seldom has a Dollond been directed on a prettier sight. He at once deserted the lunar theory for a lunar observation, at least, an observation of the Diana.

"A man," thought Egerton to himself, "might as well try to write an essay on the cuneiform character in an opera-box, while Grisi was singing, as to read mathematics with a telescope near him and those two wood nymphs practising their art within its range."

What a graceful attitude! The left arm and

foot advanced, the right hand drawn back to the ear, the all-important moment while the little wrist is trying to overcome its tremor and take a steady aim. Whiz! Where is it? Plop it goes into the bull's eye. And then the quick walk to the other target, and the cheek flushed with the excitement of success, and the fluttering of white muslin, and the search for the arrows that have missed! Heart of flesh can't stand it!

But Egerton heard a footstep in the passage, and thought at first that it was Herbert's. He instantly put down the telescope from a feeling of dislike that Herbert should find him amusing himself in such a manner. It was an act of instinct rather than deliberation, but it made him aware that he had been doing something which he could not quite reconcile to his conscience.

"It is true," said he, "there is nothing in their occupation that need call forth a blush, even were there a dozen spectators. But still, they *do* believe themselves to be quite alone and unobserved, and it is a sort of unwarrantable

intrusion on their privacy, if I watch their every little act when quite unseen myself."

But now the step was heard again.

"I wish," said Herbert, as he entered the room, "that you had never taken that unlucky idea into your head of making me write the Legend of Pilgrim's Point. I know my cousins will expect me to produce something, and will ask for it when we dine there on Monday. But I am not in the cue for such things now, and I can make nothing of it."

"Never bore yourself about it, man," replied Egerton, "anything will do."

"But I cannot write anything of the sort, and it is mere waste of time to try. I wish you would do it yourself, as you seem to think it so very easy."

"Oh, I'll write some nonsense for you, if you like, with great pleasure."

Egerton sat down, and Herbert took up a book.

Half an hour afterwards he asked if Egerton were inclined to walk.

"No, thank you," replied Egerton. "As I have begun this piece of absurdity, I may as well finish it at once."

"Well," said Herbert, "I think I shall take a stroll up to the Hall. I see that my cousins are amusing themselves with a little archery, and hope to be in time to join them."

Herbert's eye had fallen accidentally upon the tell-tale telescope. As he pronounced the last words he watched Egerton's face most narrowly, and read in it such an unequivocal expression of annoyance, that he could not entertain a moment's doubt that had Egerton known the object of his walk, he would gladly have accepted the invitation. Neither did Egerton's countenance belie his feelings, for he would have given much to recall his refusal. He could not, however, do so now without admitting Herbert to a full share of his confidence, and to this step he entertained the greatest reluctance. His feelings were of too recent a growth to admit of his exposing them willingly to the view of another, however intimate; and Herbert's constrained

manner during the few preceding days, coupled with his relationship to Miss Campbell, were additional motives for reserve.

Herbert left the room immediately, and thus gave Egerton no time to devise any plausible excuse for joining him. He had not proceeded very far on his way to Oakwood, when he heard a quick step behind him.

"Good morning, Mr. Campbell," said Mr. Walker. "Are you bound for Oakwood? If so, perhaps you will allow me to accompany you."

"Good morning, Mr. Walker, I shall be happy to have the pleasure of your company," replied Herbert, with more politeness than truth.

"Your friend, Mr. Egerton, will stay the whole of next week, will he not?"

"Such, I believe, is his intention."

"He seems to be a rather superior sort of man," said Mr. Walker; "at any rate, I admire his taste."

"So do I in many respects," replied Herbert, "but I do not know to what you particularly refer."

"Well, I certainly think you are right to limit his taste to certain respects," said Mr. Walker, "for between ourselves there are some things on the other hand in which he does not seem to have shown the best taste in the world."

Herbert felt rather disgusted at Mr. Walker's presuming to criticise Egerton to him; but his curiosity to know to what he could refer was a still stronger feeling, and he therefore replied:

"You speak in riddles, Mr. Walker."

"Ah, well," said that gentleman mysteriously, and perceiving his advantage, "I dare say I am mistaken, and perhaps it would hardly be polite in me to say anything more on the subject to a friend of his. We all have our little failings. I think he is rather a good-looking man at any rate, just the sort of man for a woman to get a little spoony about."

Mr. Walker looked at Herbert as he said these words, and felt convinced that he had not missed his aim. Herbert winced slightly, but making a strong effort to conceal his discomposure replied somewhat stiffly:

"If you happen to know of anything evincing particularly bad taste on the part of Mr. Egerton I think you had better tell me what you mean at once, and thus give me an opportunity of defending him."

"Well, if you wish it, I certainly will. Indeed, to be quite honest, considering you as an old friend, I had almost thought it my duty to call your attention to one little thing, which, though visible enough to a bystander like myself, perhaps may have escaped your observation."

"What on earth are you driving at, Mr. Walker!" said Herbert, whose patience was nearly exhausted.

"Don't get angry, Mr. Campbell. Remember that it is merely as a friend that I speak at all, and I am very probably mistaken. Still, what I did mean by saying Mr. Egerton seemed to be a man of good taste, is simply this, that I think he is by no means blind to the great beauty of a certain young lady not a hundred miles from here, whom I need not specify more particularly, and who was generally believed to look with no un-

favourable eyes on a certain young gentleman, who shall be nameless also."

"I don't understand your insinuations, sir," said Herbert, turning pale, "but if they are in any way directed against the honour of my friend, you may rely upon it they have no foundation in truth."

"Oh, very well, Mr. Campbell, if you choose to take amiss what was only meant as a friendly warning, I have done. I shall say nothing more than that I hope you may long retain these very charitable sentiments towards Mr. Egerton. They do your heart much honour, really much honour," continued Mr. Walker, somewhat satirically. "In your present mood, however, I think we had better part company. I will walk on and leave you till a little reflection has brought you to see my well meant observations in their true light. Good morning, sir." Mr. Walker quickened his pace.

"Stop," said Herbert hastily, "you forget that you have only told me what you considered to be a proof of Mr. Egerton's good taste, but

you also consider that he has been guilty of bad taste. May I ask to what you allude?"

"I should have thought," said Mr. Walker, with an air of offended dignity, "I should have thought that I had already said enough to make it quite evident to what I allude. But if you wish to have it in express words, I must openly confess to you I cannot admire the taste of a man who takes so little trouble to conceal a feeling which involves a breach of friendship, and which, under all the circumstances of his visit to Stonecombe, certainly does him no honor. After the manner, however, in which you have thought proper to receive a friendly communication, I must decline entering any further into the subject. Good morning, sir, and please to remember that this conversation has been strictly confidential."

As soon as Mr. Walker was a hundred yards in advance of Herbert, he muttered to himself:

"I may not know quite so much Latin as you do, Mr. Herbert Campbell, but I do know a thing or two still, which you do not. At any

rate I have studied Shakespeare to some advantage, and flatter myself I could come out pretty strong in the character of Iago. That is not altogether a bad morning's work, and all managed in five minutes. I have paid you out pretty well for laughing at me the other evening, and in the presence of that dear little Bertha too, and unless I am very much mistaken, I have secured you as an unconscious ally in my own game. If you don't get up a quarrel with that puppy Egerton, and bundle him out of Stonecombe the very first opportunity, my name is not John Walker. Please do it quickly, Mr. Herbert Campbell, for I should prefer having the field to myself; and if she has a few more *tête-à-tête* walks with that young coxcomb, she may give me a good deal of trouble yet."

Mr. Walker had shot his arrow in the dark. He had reasoned to himself that whether he hit the mark or missed it, the subject was of far too delicate a nature for Herbert to be willing to repeat the conversation to Egerton, and consequently that his calumnies would escape detec-

tion. But Herbert's manner had betrayed his uneasiness from the first, and Mr. Walker was satisfied that his amiable little scheme had been crowned with success.

"Egerton false!" said Herbert to himself. "Never! I should as soon think of distrusting my own father, as of doubting Egerton's honor. It is a lie of Walker's. I have no direct proofs, it is true; but I am morally convinced that that fellow is a rogue. But then, lie as it is, he must have seen something that suggested it. Yes, yes, it is only too clear he must have marked the interest with which she listens to him, how she values his opinion, how she—oh, Heavens! to think that it should have become evident to this low, vulgar scamp, half fool, half knave. The thought is enough to drive one mad. And Mary too! She thinks she loves me still, and little dreams that in that intellectual admiration of hers, she has admitted the enemy that will make sad havoc with her peace. Oh! that Egerton and I had never crossed each other's paths! Well, the week will soon be

over, and I am not very likely to insist upon the fortnight now. Ha! ha! ha! what a short-sighted fool I have been. Have I not loved her with all my strength, and all my soul? How sick I am of love, and friendship, and life itself. I cannot go to the Hall to-day. I will walk down to the beach; the sea is my best comforter. Poor Mary! she feels a sister's love for me, and little dreams that Egerton is stealing her very soul."

Just as Herbert had reached the outskirts of the town on his way to the beach, he met his father. Mr. Edward Campbell came up to his son with a good deal of affectionate anxiety in his countenance, and taking his hand, said:

"My dear Herbert, turn round with me. I want to say a few words to you. It is quite clear to me that your pale, worn look is not entirely attributable to hard reading, and that you have something on your mind. I thought I could see what it was the first day you were here, and believing that your melancholy and

your headaches arise from nothing more than the trial to the spirits occasioned by a state of suspense, I spoke to your uncle the other day, and I hope that the result of our conversation will prove satisfactory to you. When the subject was brought up last Christmas, your uncle wished that there should be no regular engagement between you and Mary till after you had taken orders. This did not appear to me unreasonable, and we agreed to leave the whole affair till that time. As, however, I know that there are many disadvantages in this sort of doubtful state, in which two young persons are neither quite free nor quite engaged, I have made an appeal to my brother in your favour, and in consideration of the high opinion he has of you, and his sincere wish to set your mind at ease, he has promised to leave you and Mary to settle it between yourselves."

Herbert was silent. After a pause of a minute or two his father turned short round, and was much shocked at the expression of misery he read in his son's face.

"Why Herbert, what is this? I expected to see you quite happy again."

"It was very kind of you, sir," said Herbert, with the tears standing in his eyes, and in a voice almost stifled with emotion: "It was very kind of you to speak to my uncle as you did, and I am truly grateful to him for his permission, but I fear I cannot take advantage af it; I fear Mary can never be mine."

"Why, Herbert! this is mere folly. Mary never be yours? why I thought you had loved her from your childhood, and that she had loved you too, though of course she could not say so until you asked her."

"I am much afraid, sir, I have mistaken the nature of Mary's feelings, but a little time will shew. Perhaps if I were to ask her to be my wife she might accept me, but I believe it would be only a sisterly love that she could give me, and I claim far more. I could not bear to be accepted out of mere compassion. It is only lately that I have come to this conclusion, and it has made me very wretched. Pardon me, my dear

father, if I leave you now, for I feel it is best for me to be alone. God will strengthen me, and I can seek him best in solitude."

So saying Herbert turned down a side path, and left his father almost dumb-founded with astonishment.

"What fools young people are to be sure!" said he; "they have had some little lover's quarrel, and now Herbert acts and talks as if the world had become a blank to him. Well I suppose it always will be so to the end of the chapter. Lovers must torment each other to enjoy their happiness properly afterwards. His dear mother and I had our time of it, and I dare say in a quarter of a century Herbert's son will be rushing about in the same absurd way, and with about as much reason. Well, I am glad I know that it is nothing more; Freeman was right it seems. They will soon make it up again, and then Herbert will regain his appetite and good looks.

CHAPTER XI.

On the following day no intercourse took place between the inmates of the Hall and the Vicarage, beyond the exchange of a few words after the morning service. Monday at length arrived, and shortly after luncheon Egerton and Herbert proceeded to Oakwood. They were very kindly received by Mr. Campbell, but there was a little embarrassment in the manner of the ladies, which however soon passed away.

"Are you a good shot with a bow, Mr. Egerton?" said Mary.

"I cannot say that I am," replied Egerton, "I have not had much practice."

"Everybody in this part of the country seems to have gone mad about archery," said Mr. Campbell. "Archery meetings and fêtes are all the fashion just now. It is rather a pretty amusement. I mean to join you in half-an-hour myself, and try my skill too, but I am afraid my archery days are gone by. Don't wait for me; the ladies will equip you with all that is necessary."

The young people left the room, and proceeded towards the lawn, where tall Thomas was engaged in placing the targets. On their way, Miss Campbell asked Herbert if he had brought his legend with him.

"The inspiration would not come," said Herbert, "and so I was obliged to find a substitute. Egerton was kind enough to execute my task for me."

Bertha hesitated a moment before she could summon up the courage to ask Egerton for the production in question, and was thus anticipated by Mary, who felt no such scruples.

"Oh, that's capital! Will you read it to us

at once, Mr. Egerton? Suppose we go first to the summer-house and hear the story of the Pilgrim's sorrows and melancholy end, and then perhaps papa will be ready to join us, and we shall still have plenty of time for the archery."

No one offering any objection to Mary's proposal, the whole party adjourned to the summer-house, where Egerton read as follows:

"THE LEGEND OF PILGRIM'S POINT.

"To begin at the beginning, you must know that once upon a time there lived in this part of the world a certain knight with a very fine name —Sir Lance-a-lot Ride-at-'em, of Clatterspur Castle. And this Sir Lance-a-lot had a very black beard, and very large spurs, and a very long sword, and when he walked, it went clatter, clatter, clatter against the pavement, and produced a very imposing effect upon Sir Lance-a-lot's vassals, who all quaked in their shoes; at least those that had any, and they were not very numerous.

"Now, in the neighbourhood of Sir Lance-a-lot's castle there lived another bold knight with another fine name—Lord Groggy Gouty-pins, of Flannelwellin Castle. And this lord had a very beautiful daughter, and her name was the Lady Wilhelmina.

"Unfortunately there was a feud between Lord Groggy and Sir Lance-a-lot, for Lord Groggy was a Knight of the Noble Order of the Braces, and looked down with great contempt on Sir Lance-a-lot, who was only a Knight Companion of the Wash-hand-basin. Now, every body knows the Order of the Braces is a charitable institution, intended to find old lords a worthy object of ambition; whereas, the Wash-hand-basin is given only for the paltry consideration of merit, and is therefore far less honorable. It was, therefore, quite natural that Lord Groggy and Sir Lance-a-lot should hate each other like blazes. Lord Groggy used to scowl at Sir Lance-a-lot like the sign of the Saracen's Head; and when Sir Lance-a-lot saw Lord Groggy, he used to look blacker at him

than his own beard, and rattled his spurs and clattered his sword louder than ever. But these sentiments of Sir Lance-a-lot's did not extend to Lord Groggy's daughter. So, after dinner, Sir Lance-a-lot used to walk up and down by the area railings in front of Flannelwellin Castle, and put up his beaver and smoke a cigar. Then Lord Groggy used to look out of the parlour window, and swear, and say to Sir Lance-a-lot:

"'Thunder and Lightning! You shan't have my daughter.'

"And then Sir Lance-a-lot used to answer:

"'Jack-boots and spurs! but I will.'

"Generally, Lady Wilhelmina used to come to her bed-room window in the third floor, and then Sir Lance-a-lot used to kiss the tips of his fingers to her; and he would have waved a very fine cambric pocket-handkerchief, only he didn't carry a pocket-handkerchief at all, and had no pocket to put it in.

"Sometimes of an evening, when the old lord had taken his nightcap (which was not made of cotton but of rum and water),and had begun to

snooze in his easy chair, the Lady Wilhelmina would steal out to meet Sir Lance-a-lot at a certain rock, and he used to say all sorts of fine things to her, which, however, I won't repeat, because I don't know them, and I would not invent for the world.

"Now one Sunday old Lord Groggy's butler came to his master after church, quite out of breath, and with his face as red as a turkey cock, and said:

"'Oh, my Lord, my Lord! he's been, and gone, and done it! He has, my Lord, indeed he has!'

"Here my Lord also got very red in the face, and said—

"'Thunder and lightning! who's been and gone and done what, you old numskull?'

"Then the old butler said:

"'The bans, my Lord, the bans! He's gone —bans published—heard distinctly—Lady Wilhelmina Groggy, spinster—if any man knows any just—oh, my Lord, Sir Lance-a-lot Ride-at-em, of Clatterspur Castle—cause or impediment!'

"'Thunder and light—'

"But before the old Lord had got out the the whole oath, a 'cute dodge struck him, and he fell into a deep fit of musing. And he mused so long and so deeply, that the old red-faced butler got quite frightened, and turned as white as his own stockings, which is not perhaps saying much, for it was near the end of the month.

"'Then,' said Lord Groggy, 'go and lock up Lady Wilhelmina in her bedroom and bring me the key.'

"And the old butler went and locked up Lady Wilhelmina and brought Lord Groggy the key.

"'Then,' said Lord Groggy, 'go and fetch Dr. Camomile.'

"Presently a very large stick, with a very large gold knob, was seen coming towards the castle, and behind it, Dr. Camomile, in his best Sunday pea-green velvet coat, black inexpressibles, and silver buckles.

"The lord was closeted for a quarter of an hour with the doctor, who came away with each hand

in a pocket of the inexpressibles, chinking guineas at a fearful rate. He looked very merry, but he tried to look very grave, and said that the Lady Wilhemina was dangerously ill, and that he should send up some pills to be taken in the evening and a black dose for the next morning. All my lord's vassals looked very doleful, and orders were given that nobody was to get drunk in the castle that evening, as Lady Wilhemina's head could not bear the noise.

"Late that night the old butler was cooling himself, after the excitement of the day by taking a turn under his lady's window. 'Dear me, I must turn in,' thought he, 'it's beginning to rain,—and to hail, too.' But it was not really, you know. Lady Wilhelmina was only throwing the pills and the draught out of the window on to the old butler's bald pate below.

"Dr. Camomile called the next day, ordered the medicine as before, and Lady Wilhelmina promised she would take it just like the first. When he came out of her room, he chinked his

guineas again, looked very grave, and shook his head, but said nothing. Then the old butler shook his head, but said nothing. Then all the servants shook their heads, but said nothing. Then all the vassals shook their heads, but said nothing; so that there was nothing but shaking of heads on that day on Lord Groggy's estate, but nothing on earth was said. Sir Lance-a-lot Ride-at-em smoked his cigar under the window as usual, and shook his head, and he also said nothing. Lord Groggy Gouty-pins looked out of the parlour window, and shook his fist as well as his head, and was going to say 'thunder and lightning,' but he thought better of it, and also said nothing.

"The next day Dr. Camomile came as usual, and when he came out he chinked his guineas and shook his head, and having like a prudent man brought onions in his pocket handkerchief, said, with tears in his eyes, that poor Lady Wilhelmina was dead. And the looking grave, and the shaking of heads was passed round just as on the day before, and if it had been in

America, you would have thought you had got among the Shakers.

"Next day the funeral was to take place; and Lord Groggy and his butler, and all the servants and all the vassals followed, two and two, behind the coffin, and blubbered, and howled, in the most touching manner, all out of respect. But Lady Wilhelmina was not inside the coffin. Do you know why? Because she was not dead at all, but had just been eating a beefsteak and mixed pickles, for breakfast, and was putting a darn into her French barége, for the next assize ball. Sir Lance-a-lot Ride-at-em, however, was there, and pulled the hair out of his black beard which had turned quite grey from grief. And Lord Groggy tore his hair too, or at least he would have done, only he was quite bald and wore a wig, and so he tugged at that instead. When the procession passed under the lady's windows, she called out to Sir Lance-a-lot that she was alive and kicking. This was literally true, as was subsequently confirmed by the French governess, who having tried to keep her

ladyship from the window, had received a smart rebuff from her ladyship's white satins. Old Lord Groggy squinted up at the window, saw there was a difficulty between his daughter and her governess, and with admirable presence of mind, ordered the band to strike up a funeral march, which set poor Sir Lance-a-lot's teeth on edge, and prevented him from hearing the lady's cries.

"As soon as the funeral was over, Sir Lance-a-lot Ride-at-'em wiped his eyes with the cuff of his coat of mail, and said to his squire:

"'Jackboots and spurs! Bring me a penny-worth of peas.'

"The peas were brought. He doffed his mail, donned a pilgrim's garb, put the peas into his shoes, and started for the Holy Land. Wicked calumniators have asserted that he was seen emptying his shoes as soon as he had got a hundred yards on the road. But they were probably bribed by Lord Groggy.

"Nothing further is known of his pilgrimage than that he left Dover by the mail-boat, at

11.30 p.m., was very sick on the passage, and in pure absence of mind called to the Lady Wilhelmina to bring him a basin.

"As soon as he was fairly off, Lord Groggy released his daughter from her confinement. She recovered her spirits, and danced at the assize ball.

"Two years afterwards, at twelve o'clock one moonlight night, a pilgrim might have been seen to walk up to the rock which now bears his name, and stand there absorbed in deep thought. At the same moment the Lady Wilhelmina got out of bed, having just remembered that she had not watered her mignionette on the window sill. She gazed on the beautiful moonlight sea. Ah, that form! What does she see? Her dear Sir Lance-a-lot is gazing at the moon! He seems to mutter to himself. 'Jackboots and spurs!' were the words wafted by the western breeze to her enravished ears. Ah, those loved, those well-known accents! Forgetting the lightness of her costume, to get out of the window and slip down the water-pipe were the actions of a second. She

rushes towards the point. He hears a step, he turns, he sees her.

"'What!' he exclaimed, 'the lovely Wilhelmina Gouty-pins, now dead two years, and all in white! Jack-boots and spurs! It must be her ghost!'

"The sudden fright was too great. Unheeding the precipice, he started back. Jack-boots and spurs had hardly assured her of the identity of her beloved, when the heels that had worn those knightly emblems were seen kicking in the air, and then sinking gracefully into the abyss below! The Lady Wilhelmina was just going to follow him, a sacrifice to the constancy of her affection, when she remembered that she had another hole to darn in her French barège, so she trotted home, swarmed up the waterpipe, and went to bed."

"How very unsentimental," said Mary, laughing, as soon as Egerton had concluded.

"I had fully expected that we should all have been weeping by the time you got to the end; and now the last picture you present us with is the desolate maiden darning her barège. I am afraid, Mr. Egerton, as you make such fun of her and her lover, that you have never been in love yourself."

Mary saw that her last remark had distressed Bertha, who evidently considered their acquaintance with Mr. Egerton of too recent a date to render such a tone of badinage quite becoming. Mary would gladly have recalled her words, and in order to conceal her embarrassment, looked out at the clouds, and continued hastily:

"How black it looks all round. I am afraid there will be no archery for us to-day."

The gentlemen went out to look at the weather, and expressed it as their opinion that a thunder-storm was approaching rapidly.

"How very unfortunate," said Miss Campbell. "There is an end to our shooting for to-day."

"Oh, no," said Mary. "I have a capital

proposition to make. Suppose we adjourn to the shooting-gallery. You remember, Herbert, you have long promised to teach me how to fire a pistol. Have you any objection to give me a lesson to-day?"

"With all my heart, Mary. What do you say, Bertha?"

"The clouds look so very threatening that I think we cannot do better. I must beg you to take me as a pupil too; the gallery is not far from the house, and the noise will let them know where to send umbrellas for us, when we want to go in."

"Is Mr. Campbell a good shot?" asked Egerton as they left the summer-house.

"Papa? Oh no; at least not with a pistol. I do not think he ever touches one. It is Herbert's gallery rather than ours. Papa built some new conservatories lately, because he wished to have some adjoining the house. When they were finished, Herbert suggested that he should not pull down the old ones, but turn them into a shooting gallery, and as papa thought that

when we had friends staying with us it might offer a little change to the billiard room in wet weather, Herbert's idea has been carried out."

The party entered the conservatory. It was about fifty feet long by fourteen broad. At one end were placed two small targets, and at the other there were several tables with pistol cases, flasks, bullets, caps, and all other necessary apparatus for shooting.

After a proper amount of explanation from her instructor, Bertha contrived to hit the target three times, but the bullet struck it at a rather long distance from the centre. Mary's hand trembled too much at the expected report to allow of her taking a very steady aim, and with the first two shots she missed the target altogether.

"And now," said Mary, as she raised her pistol for the third shot, "you shall see what real skill is."

"Too high, Mary, much too high," said Herbert, "and you must hold your hand steadier."

Bang!

"On the edge of the bull's eye. Bravo, Mary!" exclaimed Herbert.

Mary laughed, "I told you I should shew you what skill is. Of course I only missed before in order to encourage poor Bertha. And now I am quite satisfied with my feats for to-day."

"Will you take another shot, Bertha?" said Herbert.

"No, thank you, I am afraid lest my hand should shake as much as Mary's did, and then perhaps I might spoil the pleasure of her triumph by hitting the bull's eye too."

In the mean time the storm had burst forth in all its fury. The rain poured down in torrents, and flash followed flash in rapid succession. Bertha looked anxiously to see if any servant were coming to their rescue with umbrellas from the house, but no one appeared. Mary suggested that the noise made by the storm had probably prevented the firing being heard; and such indeed was actually the case.

"As we are close prisoners we may as well

continue our practice," said Herbert. "Suppose, Egerton, you and I shoot a match. As I have a little the advantage of you in point of skill, I will only score five shots to your six."

Egerton and Herbert began to fire alternately and with pretty even success. Egerton was just going to fire his fourth shot, when the unexpected report of Herbert's pistol a little behind him, somewhat discomposed him, and he prepared to take a fresh aim. Before doing so, his eye was caught by a sudden gesture of Mary's. He looked towards her; she was deadly pale, her eyes were distended, her mouth wide open, and she was struggling to speak.

"Look! Herbert!" she gasped out, pointing at the same time to the spot immediately behind Egerton.

He turned short round, and was just in time to catch Herbert in his arms. The blood welled out of the burnt and blackened coat sleeve in a crimson stream, and shewed at once the small round hole by the shoulder by which the ball had entered.

"Good God!" exclaimed Egerton, "how did he do this?"

"I am afraid he is dying," said Mary. "Oh, Herbert, Herbert!"

The wounded man opened his eyes, but immediately closed them again with a groan. With some difficulty they placed him on a chair.

"It is only in the shoulder," said Egerton, "and I daresay will not prove fatal. We must get assistance to carry him in doors. This is no time for ceremony," he continued hastily, "may I ask you, Miss Campbell, to run to the house and send a servant here directly; I would willingly go myself, but I must support him, and that is beyond your strength."

The storm was still raging, and the thunder came crashing forth in long and deafening peals; but Bertha heeded it not, indeed she was scarcely aware of it, and running as fast as her strength would allow over the sodden grass and through the deep pools that flooded the garden walks, she entered the hall. Her father had seen her wild

haste and haggard look from his study window, and came out to meet her.

"Good Heavens, Bertha!" he exclaimed, what has happened? "Has Mary been struck by the lightning?"

"No, no," gasped Bertha, "Herbert—pistol gallery. Herbert has had an accident. Thomas must come and help Mr. Egerton to bring him to the house. Please send Thomas directly—Evans for Dr. Freeman!"

Bertha rang the bell violently as she uttered these hasty words, and without waiting for a reply. Leaving her father to give the necessary orders, she ran off again to the shooting gallery. In the meantime Herbert had fainted from loss of blood. Thomas appeared a few minutes later, and assisted Egerton in carrying him to the house.

"Have you sent a messenger for Dr. Freeman?" were Egerton's first words to Mr. Campbell, as he entered the hall.

"I have sent Evans on horseback, and told him that after he had left his message there he

was to call at the Vicarage, and tell my brother that Herbert had had a slight accident, and that perhaps he might as well come here to see him."

"I am afraid," said Bertha, "that Evans will hardly understand how to break it to my uncle, and if he learns it too suddenly, the shock will kill him."

"Shall I take another horse," said Egerton, "and ride straight to the Vicarage?"

"Before another horse could be saddled," said Mr. Campbell, "Evans will have been to Dr. Freeman's and have got to the Vicarage too; he will have had ten minutes' start of you, and he went off at full gallop."

"Then I will run there on foot," said Egerton, "I shall save more than half a mile by not going round by the lodge, but cutting across the paddock at the end of the lawn."

"Don't try that, pray," said Miss Campbell, "you forgot there is no gate there, and you will have to get over the iron fence with the ditch beyond."

"Oh, I can jump that," said Egerton, and without giving any time for further remonstrance he seized his hat, and ran out of the room.

"I am afraid," said Bertha, turning ashy pale, "that we shall have another accident. He can never jump that fence, and he will half kill himself in the attempt."

She rushed to the garden door, but it was too late to stop him,—he was already out of hearing. She stood, however, in breathless anxiety, quite unconscious of the torrents of rain that were drenching her to the skin, for when she thought of that iron fence, with its long sharp spikes, and the wet slippery ground, she felt sick at heart with the greatness of her fear. He is near the end of the lawn and quickens his pace. "Thank God! He has cleared it, and is runing at full speed across the paddock. If he can jump that, Woodman's brook is a mere nothing, and then he will be in the lane."

In the mean time Evans had galloped as fast as his horse could put legs to the ground, and was already within a quarter of a mile of the

town, when he met the Vicar returning from the sick bed of one of his parishioners. "Evans," he shouted at the top of his voice. "Evans, Evans, what is the matter? Is your master ill?"

"Oh, sir," said the man reining in hastily. "Oh, sir, pray do not stop me. I am going for Dr. Freeman. Mr. Herbert, sir, Mr. Herbert," gasped the man hesitating.

"Well man, what about Herbert?"

"Has shot himself, sir. Pray don't detain me. I am going to fetch Dr. Freeman." Evans dug his spurs into his horse's sides, and was off again at full gallop, without stopping to see the effect that his words had produced.

The old man heard the fatal message and tried to walk towards the Hall. But his limbs refused to do their office; he reeled across the road and would have fallen had it not been for a gate against which he leant for a minute or two, and cried like a child. At length, summoning up all his strength, and shutting up his umbrella that he might use it as a support, he proceeded on his way. Herbert's wretchedness two days

before, and Evans' words that he had shot himself presented only one image to the Vicar's mind, and that the saddest. "Oh Herbert my son!" he exclaimed, "oh Herbert, Herbert, that it should come to this! The death of the suicide! Oh, that some fever had carried thee off in thy childhood, and saved thee from this awful crime! But it is God's will, it is God's will. Oh God! Thy ways are indeed inscrutable. Give me strength to say, thy will be done."

At this moment there was a rustling in the hedge, and Egerton appeared before him. Egerton saw the old man's reeling step and haggard look, and his cheek drenched with tears, and knew at once that Evans had anticipated him.

"Take my arm, sir, take my arm," he said. Mr. Edward Campbell accepted the proffered assistance, but shuddered when he saw the deep red stains on Egerton's hand and shirt. Egerton remarked it, and continued, "it is not perhaps so bad as it seemed at first. I do not believe that it is mortal. He may live yet to be a comfort to you and to all of us."

"What," exclaimed the Vicar. "He is not dead! Is not all hope gone!"

"Oh no, certainly not. He is only wounded in the shoulder. It was an accident in the shooting gallery. I had my back turned towards him at the moment, and did not see it; but as far as I can make out, he must have put a loaded pistol down on the table rather carelessly, and on whole cock. It fell off, and the jar, as it struck the hard pavement, must have made it go off. The ball has hit him in the shoulder."

"Now God be praised!" said Mr. Edward Campbell. "From what Evans said, I understood it to have been his own act."

"How stupid of him! We do not know exactly how the pistol went off, but there is no question whatever about its having been purely accidental."

With the support of Egerton's arm, and considerably revived by his cheering assurance that he did not believe the wound to be dangerous, the Vicar arrived at the Hall. They were told

that Herbert had recovered from his fainting fit and had asked to see his father, but that a few minutes later he had relapsed into his former state of unconsciousness. He had been laid on a bed just as he was, as any movement seemed to increase the flow of blood, and it was deemed better to wait till the arrival of Dr. Freeman, before attempting to take off his clothes or adopting any further measure.

CHAPTER XII.

When Evans arrived at Dr. Freeman's he found that the doctor was not at home, and that the time of his return was uncertain. After leaving a message that his services were required at the Hall, he galloped off in the direction of B——, in order to fetch Mr. Smithers, the first surgeon of that town. He had not, however, proceeded above two miles on the road when he met the doctor returning in his carriage from a round of visits to country patients. He immediately stopped him, and in as few words as possible communicated the nature of Herbert's accident.

"Will you take my horse, sir?" said Evans, "you will reach the Hall at least a quarter of an hour sooner."

"No thank you, Evans," said the doctor, "I cannot do much good without my instruments, and I think it better therefore to go on in my carriage. Drive fast, William; I know the horses are pretty well done up, but you must not spare them in a case like this."

Evans rode back to the Hall, and communicated the welcome intelligence that the doctor might be expected in a very few minutes.

As soon as he arrived he removed the coat by ripping up the seams, and then proceeded to examine the wound. The inflammation was far too great to allow of his making any immediate attempt to extract the ball, which a cursory examination induced him to believe had taken an oblique course, and penetrated in the direction of the spine. Having given the necessary orders for the reduction of the inflammation, he descended to the drawing room, leaving Egerton with the patient.

Dr. Freeman looked very grave as he entered the room; Mary cast at him an agonized glance of inquiry, but could not find the courage to speak. Bertha said, "can you give us any hope that the wound is not dangerous?"

"I can give you hopes," he replied, "but I think it only right to add that the danger is great. I cannot yet trace the exact course of the ball, and it would not be safe at present to attempt it. It has in my opinion gone very near certain vital parts, but I hope and trust it has not touched them, and that the valuable life of your cousin may yet be spared. In a few days, perhaps, even to-morrow, I may be able to speak with greater certainty. At present I must leave you, but I shall return in a couple of hours, and you may feel assured that if I think there is the slightest advantage in it, I will stay through the night."

As soon as the doctor had left the room, Mary threw herself on Bertha's neck, and exclaimed, "Oh, Bertha; there's hope yet! He may live still." She burst into tears; they were the first

she had shed since that dreadful moment. "He may live still," she repeated. "If he were to die, Bertha, I should never forget that pale face, and that pool of blood, and the deep groan when we placed him on the chair, and the thought that I had been his murderer would haunt me to my dying day."

"Why, Mary, dear Mary, how can you talk so foolishly? You his murderer! What do you mean?"

"Was it not my proposition that we should go to the shooting gallery? And if we had not gone, the accident would never have happened."

"Yes, love, but if we were to argue in that way, hundreds of persons were equally guilty. You might as well lay the blame on papa for having asked him to come here this afternoon. Only those who through design or carelessness are the cause of such an accident have really ground for self reproach."

Mary smiled through her tears.

"Thank you, Bertha, I see it was folly to say

so, but when one is very unhappy, it is so natural to find reasons for blaming one's self. But you have consoled me a little. Whatever happens we know at least that it is God's will, and must learn to resign ourselves to it. But it is very difficult to imagine why one so loving, so generous, so noble, should thus be taken so early, and before he could do all the good he had planned. I wish to have faith, Bertha, but it is very hard sometimes."

"You must not anticipate the worst yet, dear. You know Dr. Freeman entertains hopes. Perhaps your faith may not be tried this time."

Dr. Freeman came late that evening, and gave a tolerably favourable report of his patient, but insisted on the Vicar's going to bed, as he could be of no use, and his health was not strong enough to bear the fatigue of watching, especially where his feelings were so much interested. Mrs. Brady had been regularly installed as nurse, and was quite able to give the wounded man all the attention that was necessary. Dr. Freeman also advised that Egerton should return

to the Vicarage, but met with such very decided opposition from that gentleman, that he did not press it.

A dressing-room adjoining Herbert's chamber, containing a small bed, was assigned to him, and he regularly took up his quarters at the Hall. Not that Egerton intended to go to bed that night; on the contrary, he preferred an easy chair in Herbert's room, as he was determined that nothing should induce him to leave his friend's bedside as long as there was the slightest possibility of his assistance being valuable.

During the night Herbert suffered a great deal of pain, and though he bore it with manly fortitude, every now and then a long deep groan would escape him, bearing sad evidence to the intensity of his suffering. The cold applications which had been ordered for the reduction of the inflammation required to be constantly renewed, and neither Brady nor Egerton, though nominally keeping alternate watches, were able to close their eyes for more than a few minutes. Towards morning, however, Herbert seemed rather

easier, and even enjoyed a short sleep. During this interval of calm, as Egerton sat by his friend's side, and watched his pale face, and thought of his unselfish nature, and the ardent devotion with which he had looked forward to fulfilling the duties of his sacred profession, and then remembered how all these generous hopes seemed likely to be blighted, he felt that he would gladly have taken the place of the sufferer on his blood-stained couch, and borne far greater agony, if by so doing he could only have preserved him to the love of the many sleepless ones in that house of sorrow, whose hearts were now centred in that sick chamber.

But when again he remembered that few as Herbert's years had been, the life of one so pure and noble could never pass away without leaving treasured memories in those hearts which would make them the purer and the nobler too, he felt that such an end was not without its consolation to the faith that could appreciate it.

While he was engaged in these reflections, the silence was broken by the deep-toned bell of the

turret clock. It struck three, and the last vibration had hardly died away, when he thought he heard a slight noise in the passage. He listened at the door, but all was quiet again, and he concluded that he had been mistaken. In a few minutes, however, the noise was repeated, and this time he was sure that his ear had not played him false. He walked to the door, opened it gently, and perceived in the twilight at a short distance the figure of a woman attempting to retreat. For an instant she turned her head to see who had interrupted her lonely watch. The impulse had been involuntary, but it was fatal to her purpose of concealment, for Egerton immediately recognised the features of Mary Campbell, almost as white indeed as the dressing-gown in which she was closely muffled. Finding herself discovered, she returned towards him, and clasping his arm wildly, said in an almost hissing whisper:

"Don't deceive me! Pray don't! Tell me the truth. He is not dead?"

"Oh, no," said Egerton, encouragingly; "so

far from it, I think he is suffering less now than he has done yet, for he seems to be asleep."

Then seeing how haggard she looked, and how she shivered with the morning cold, he added:

"But really, Miss Campbell, let me urge you to go to bed again, for it is enough to make you seriously ill to be in this cold passage at such an hour. Have you been here long?"

"Ever since twelve o'clock," she replied, in a calmer voice. "I could not sleep, and I was so afraid he might get worse, or even die, and I know nothing about it till to-morrow. I have listened to every movement in the room, and have heard every groan that he has uttered, and though it went each time to my heart, at least I drew from it the consolation that he was still alive. But during the last hour of perfect stillness, a horrid fear has been creeping over me that he was dead, and that I should never, never see him again."

"You may be comforted, Miss Campbell," said Egerton, "for I assure you it is my belief that he will get over it. But pray do not stay here

any longer; if not for your own sake, at least for that of others, to whom you are no less dear than Herbert."

"Will you promise to send Brady to me, Mr. Egerton, if it should appear to you that there is any change for the worse?"

"I will," replied Egerton. "I will give you my word. But now good night."

Egerton was endeavouring to turn the latch of Herbert's door as gently as possible, when he perceived Mary still standing at a few yards distance, and making a sign that there was something more she wished to say to him. He walked towards her, and could see the blood mantling in the cheeks so pale before, as she said:

"It would be absurd *now*, Mr. Egerton, for me to attempt to conceal from you what you may perhaps have guessed already. As you are Herbert's friend, I do not feel this compulsory confidence in the same painful way that I should have done under other circumstances. But still I must request you not to speak of having found

me here to any of the family, not even to Bertha. It is so very difficult for others who have not been in a similar situation to appreciate the motives and feelings that lead to such an act."

Egerton promised the discretion she required, and added:

"I assure you, Miss Campbell, that none who know you and Herbert could wish to blame you for the interest you feel in him, or the manner in which you have shewn it, your own sister least of all. I must, however, make one exception," he continued, smiling, "and that is Dr. Freeman, for I think he would give you a good scolding, and say you ought to have been in your bed long ago, unless indeed he wished to have you for a patient."

Mary thanked him with her eyes rather than her tongue, and retired to her room. Feeling much consoled by his encouraging view of Herbert's state, and being completely exhausted by her long, cold, and dreary watch, and her previous excitement, she soon fell asleep.

Egerton resumed his former post by his friend's bedside, and felt still more strongly than ever the value of the life that seemed to hang on so slight a thread.

The next few days were very trying ones for all the inmates of Oakwood Hall. Egerton could not be induced to leave the sick chamber for more than an hour at a time, and watched every change in the symptoms with the most intense anxiety. Dr. Freeman had studied surgery as well as medicine, and having passed the college, would have been quite justified in taking the whole responsibility upon himself. But knowing that it would be a satisfaction to the family to have a second opinion, he suggested that Mr. Smithers should be called in, and that the case should be placed under their joint management. On the Friday it was agreed that an attempt might be made to extract the ball. The operation offered fewer difficulties than had at first been expected, for after the swelling had been sufficiently reduced, a hard lump was observed in the muscles of the back, indicating

the spot where the ball had lodged. An incision was made, and it was easily extracted.

For the next few days Herbert progressed favourably, and towards the end of the ensuing week, he was even allowed to receive a short visit from Mary. Egerton still retained the office which he had himself assumed of head nurse, but the absence of any immediate danger allowed him to leave a great deal more to Brady, and to take the watch only on alternate nights. When Herbert was asleep, Egerton would often steal down to the drawing-room for a few minutes, where his visits were always hailed with joy by the sisters, as he seldom failed to leave them less anxious than he had found them. The assiduity with which he had attended his friend, coupled, perhaps, with the fact of his Radical leaning in politics, had completely won the heart of Mr. Campbell, who did not hesitate to proclaim on more than one occasion that he had rarely met with a more intelligent or more amiable young man; one, indeed, more worthy in every respect to be Herbert's friend. Extraordinary as it may

seem, when Mr. Campbell indulged in these remarks in the presence of his daughters, Bertha never offered any evidence in confirmation of his opinion, or the reverse, but seemed more engaged than ever with whatever work she might have in hand. It is clear from this that the subject must have been quite indifferent to her; perhaps, indeed, she may have wondered what could make her father harp so constantly on the same dull and uninteresting theme.

Herbert could not feel otherwise than grateful to Egerton for the tender care with which he had nursed him; but as soon as the first shock of the accident had sufficiently passed away to allow him to recur to all the events of the few days preceding his accident, his gratitude became mingled with other feelings, that made the sense of obligation almost insupportable. Whatever he wanted, there was Egerton, always ready to procure it; and yet there was no man from whom, under existing circumstances, he felt less inclined to receive a favour. Had he been in his usual state of health, he would never have yielded to

the morbid fancies which now troubled his peace. But fever had given his imagination unnatural activity, at the same time that his other faculties were weakened by bodily suffering, and thus the equilibrium of his mind was for the moment destroyed. He was no longer able to distinguish between vague suspicion and real evidence, and the belief that Egerton's image had thrust itself between Mary and himself, and that her affection had ceased to be the same single loyal feeling as in former times, had assumed the form of certainty. He had never harboured so unworthy a thought as to distrust Egerton's honour. But that, as well as Egerton's other noble qualities, had become so strongly associated in his mind with the cause of his unhappiness, as to increase rather than diminish his feeling of dislike.

The false position in which he stood to his friend produced sometimes a degree of irritation extremely unfavourable to his progress. All who watched around his bed could perceive a certain sullenness in his manner for which they could not account; but Egerton attributed it

entirely to pain and other physical causes, and never for an instant allowed his interest to be cooled by the somewhat ungracious return with which it was met. This state of things, however, became at length so painful to Herbert, that he was determined to take some measures to put an end to it.

One evening, after his father had been sitting for some time by his bedside, Herbert broke the silence by enquiring if he had seen Mr. Walker lately.

"No, Herbert, not very lately, but he has been very attentive in inquiring after you; indeed, I think hardly a day has passed without his sending here or calling himself."

"It is very kind of him," said Herbert, "to take so much interest in me. Do you know, sir, I think I should rather like to see him."

The Vicar looked surprised, for he had not been aware of any great intimacy between his son and Mr. Walker, indeed he felt sure that there could be no congeniality between them. He therefore regarded Herbert's request as the

whim of an invalid, and answered that if Dr. Freeman saw no objection to Mr. Walker's paying him a visit, he of course had none to offer.

The next morning early, Herbert repeated his wish to see Mr. Walker, and begged that he might be sent for immediately. He positively refused to give any reason for his wish, beyond the fact that he had something to say to him. Dr. Freeman gave it as his opinion that it would be better for Herbert not to see anybody besides the members of his own family, as quiet was necessary to his recovery; but he added that as Herbert seemed bent on the interview, he considered that the irritation which would arise if the wish were not complied with, would probably be more prejudicial than any excitement from the interview itself.

A note was accordingly despatched to Mr. Walker, requesting his immediate attendance at the Hall.

When Herbert heard that Mr Walker had arrived, the excitement apparent in his manner made Dr. Freeman almost regret the consent he

had unwillingly given. This regret was increased when Herbert insisted on the interview taking place without witnesses. To this Dr. Freeman demurred; but he soon saw that all objections were now too late, and secretly wishing his opposite neighbour at the bottom of the sea, contented himself with begging Herbert not to enter upon any exciting topics.

Mr. Walker, having received a similar injunction, was ushered into Herbert's room. That gentleman was by no means over burdened with any superabundance of feeling, but when he saw the haggard face and emaciated form, he was at first quite unable to recognize the victim of his infamous machinations, and felt for the moment inexpressibly shocked.

"Mr. Walker," said a weak voice, "will you oblige me by taking that chair."

"I hope you are better, Mr. Campbell. All Stonecombe has been deeply afflicted at your accident, and I need not assure you that I have been as much pained by it as any one.

"It is very good of you to say so, Mr. Walker,

and I have to thank you for the great interest you have shewn in my recovery, by sending so frequently to enquire. However, as our time is short, we will proceed at once to the business on which I wish to speak to you."

"Business!" thought Mr. Walker, "I never heard that he had any independent property."

"You will probably remember, Mr. Walker, a certain conversation that you and I had together two days before the accident, on the road to Oakwood."

Mr. Walker remembered it perfectly.

"On that occasion," said Herbert, raising himself up in bed on his right elbow, "on that occasion you thought proper to throw out certain insinuations that Mr. Egerton was attached to the youngest Miss Campbell. Now, if you really entertain for me any of the regard which you have been pleased to profess, I must beg you to tell me distinctly on what grounds you have come to such a conclusion."

Mr. Walker was puzzled. It is only fair to him to state that the sight of the wounded man

in his blood-stained bandages, and the death-like glare of his sunken eyes had entirely obliterated any feeling of personal animosity, and that he would gladly have given him all the satisfaction in his power, provided he could have done so without sacrificing his own interests or his own character. He instinctively felt, however, that to retract now would be to confess himself an unprincipled liar, and at the same time to destroy all prospect of removing Egerton, whom he hated more than ever. He accordingly endeavoured to find some middle course.

"Why, really, Mr. Campbell," he said; "but pray don't get so excited. Why, as to that, you see, I—I find myself in a somewhat difficult position. I did not mention the names of any parties, you know."

Seeing a gesture of impatience on the part of Herbert, he continued:

"But perhaps I may have meant the persons you allude to; I will not positively deny it, though at the same time you must not understand me as exactly admitting it. Caution, you

know, Mr. Campbell, caution is the professional man's first duty."

"Good God! Mr. Walker. You see me lying here, probably on my death-bed, and you come to me with your confounded legal equivocations. Can you give a plain answer to a plain question, sir, or can you not?"

"Pray don't get so excited; pray don't, Mr. Campbell. I am sure I will gladly tell you all I know. Well, then—the fact is—to express myself as concisely as the case will admit,—I think I may venture to state that I did remark on several occasions—yes, I believe I may say on several occasions—some of those little attentions to—to—ahem! to Miss Campbell on the part of Mr. Egerton, which are generally regarded as evincing,—that is, which I believe are generally regarded, and not altogether without reason—regarded as evincing a sort of predilection, if I may be allowed to use the expression. But I may of course be mistaken, Mr. Campbell. *Humanum est errere*, you know."

"Don't torture me with your lying generalities, sir; your little attentions, and your predilections, but come to the point at once. What on earth," shrieked Herbert, who in his weakness had lost all self-control, "what on earth was it that you *did* see? I won't flatter you, sir; I will tell you candidly, you are about the last man of my acquaintance I would choose for a confidant. But I have no choice, I can't help myself. You know I love my cousin. You also know I shall not be here long to interfere with the happiness of her and my friend. Ha! ha! ha!—my friend!" he continued, laughing bitterly, for in his passion he had forgotten those long, long nights of solitary watching. "Now, tell me, like an honest man, if you can, what it was you saw, what it was you heard, what it was, in short, that justified you in coming to me, and with your cursed serpent's tongue making me loathe the very presence of this honorable friend of mine?"

"It is extremely difficult," said Mr. Walker, "after the lapse of several weeks to relate with

that strict accuracy, which in matters of this importance is—"

But here Mr. Walker was interrupted by Egerton's appearance at the door. Herbert's passionate exclamation and loud and bitter laughter had penetrated even to the parlour below, and feeling sure that such an interview could only be prejudicial to the patient, Egerton determined on putting an end to it at once.

"Well sir," said Herbert, who had not observed Egerton's entrance, "well sir, pray proceed, I am all attention."

"Our conversation, Mr. Campbell, was not intended for third parties, and as Mr. Egerton—"

"What, you here!" said Herbert, now perceiving the cause of Mr. Walker's hesitation, "You here! I thought you had understood that my interview with Mr. Walker was on private business, and that your company would not be required at present."

"My dear Herbert," said Egerton much hurt,

"my dear Herbert, I am sure that this excitement in your present state—".

"Don't dear me!" said Herbert, glaring wildly at the intruder, "I'll have none of it. I know you'll think yourself a much wronged man—of course you will—after all your watchings and your nursings and all the rest of it; but it is not *that* I want. It is real, true, loyal friendship, the friendship of an honorable man, sir; the friendship that would scorn to do a man petty services to his face, and betray him, yes—I repeat it—grievously, foully betray him behind his back, and that too in a point where—"

Egerton did not hear the conclusion. He felt cut to the heart, and seeing that his presence only exasperated the sick man, left the room, at the same time beckoning to Mr. Walker to follow him.

"Why, his mind must have gone!" said Egerton. "What has passed between you and Mr. Campbell that can have excited him so dreadfully, and put such absurd notions into his head?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Walker, "I can't comprehend it for the life of me. I can't conceive what he means. It is evident to me that he is delirious—in fact it *can* be nothing else."

"But what passed, Mr. Walker; what passed, sir? After the scene I have just witnessed I cannot regard your previous interview with him as confidential."

"Oh! what passed between us?" replied Mr. Walker, who had been at his wits end for a safe lie, "Well, it really is too ridiculous—too ridiculous, I hardly like to mention it. But in perfect confidence, Mr. Egerton, I may tell you—"

"Tell me nothing in confidence," interrupted Egerton, "because whatever passed, I shall certainly communicate it to his father, if I see fit."

"In that case, Mr. Egerton, I do not see how you can ask me to— "

"What, sir?" said Egerton, quickly: "After Mr. Campbell has attacked his best friend in the way you have just heard, you pretend to deny my perfect right to know what conversation

between yourself and him has led to such an extraordinary result?"

"If you put it in that way, I have no objection to mention what transpired, but I must beg you to regard it as the raving of a madman. I must leave it to your discretion not to repeat what I say, for—"

"Well, what was it?" said Egerton, impatiently.

"He seems to have taken it into his head, that I am attached to Miss Mary Campbell, and that you are favorable to my pretensions, and have done all in your power to forward them. If you think it advisable to annoy the family by repeating such absurdities, which, as you must yourself be aware, are the result of delirium and nothing else, why of course you must act as you think proper. My great regard for the patient, however, induces me to make one suggestion, and that is, that as long as he continues in his present state, all mention of Miss Mary Campbell's name should be avoided in his presence, for I have observed that it excites him

beyond measure. I believe that it is equally desirable to avoid my name also, as with his present ridiculous fancies, it can only irritate him and increase the fever."

Herbert's angry accusations, coupled with his known attachment to his cousin Mary, convinced Egerton that Mr. Walker had told him the truth. Having sent Brady to the sick chamber, he went to search for Mr. Edward Campbell, that he might communicate the result of Mr. Walker's visit. At the same time he strongly enforced the prudence of Mr. Walker's suggestion, that his own name, as well as that of Mary, should not be uttered in Herbert's hearing.

When Dr. Freeman arrived he found Herbert in a state of high fever, which he attributed entirely to the exciting meeting with Mr. Walker. He was extremely delirious in the course of the day and the ensuing night, and this still further convinced Egerton of the truth of Walker's statement. The next day he seemed worse, the fever had become more violent, and both Mr. Smithers and Dr. Freeman expressed their apprehensions

that a fatal termination might soon be expected. Egerton had endeavoured to resume his old place by Herbert's bedside, but the mere sight of him had been succeeded by such feverish excitement, that it was thought better that he should resign his place to Mary, who had repeatedly entreated to be allowed to take her share in the nursing.

When we have watched by the bed of sickness and seen the worst symptoms gradually yield to the power of science, the sleep grow more tranquil, the pulse less feverish, and our own hopes brighter at the prospect of the restoration of him we love, then is a relapse felt as a more cruel blow than the first sickness. But if such a relapse can be in any way ascribed to imprudence on the part of the nurses or physicians, to a too early indulgence in the food suitable for health, or to the excitement that the strong man's nerves alone can bear, then indeed is our grief doubly embittered by our unavailing self-reproaches. No one at Oakwood felt any doubt that whatever might have passed between Her-

bert and Mr. Walker, the excitement of that meeting was the sole cause of his present condition. Dr. Freeman had acted for the best; but, as the event had proved,—unadvisedly. Many a long hour did Mary now pass in such painful musings by Herbert's bedside. It was a source of some satisfaction to her, however, to see the manifest pleasure with which he received her little offices, in the intervals between his attacks of delirium.

About a week after the unfortunate interview, Mary had taken her accustomed post by Herbert's bedside, while Brady as usual sat on the other. He had been delirious during a great part of the day, but towards evening had sunk into a sleep. It was already twelve o'clock, and the rest of the family had retired to their rooms. Brady had been napping several times, and Mary had accordingly desired her to go to bed for two or three hours, promising to call her instantly, in case she should want her assistance. As she sat alone in the dimly lighted room, and thought over her love for Herbert and his love for her,

and the many happy hours they had spent together as children, and the deeper and more earnest tone their love had taken as they had grown older, and the hopes of a life to be passed in mutual support, she could not help wondering that God should let such feelings bear the sad fruit of the heavy affliction which now bowed her spirit to the earth.

"Perhaps," thought she, "it is God's will to punish me for having loved any one of his creatures better than Himself."

And as she mused her tears flowed afresh, and the thought gained strength that even perhaps in her love she might have sinned. She knelt down by the bedside, and burying her face in her hands, poured out her heart in prayer:

"Oh, God, forgive me," she said, "if I have loved one of thy creatures better than Thyself. I have loved him better, far better than father, mother, sister, yea, than all on earth. Perhaps I have loved him better than Thee. But let not Oh, God! the punishment of my sin fall on his

head; spare him, oh! spare him, and strengthen me that I may love him only next to Thee and Thy Son."

And the prayer was heard; it had effected its own fulfilment. She raised her tearful eyes from the couch, and they met Herbert's. Her words had awakened him. He stretched out his hand and clasped hers:

"Kiss me, dearest Mary," he said.

There was no longer any cloud between them, each knew the other's heart—it was no time for prudery, and Mary imprinted a long long kiss on the almost colourless lips.

The morning at length arrived, and with it Dr. Freeman. His patient was better, and he began to entertain fresh hopes. Herbert begged to see Egerton, and the tears filled his eyes as he pressed Egerton's hand in token of reconciliation, though it was not till many weeks later that Egerton learnt the real cause of Herbert's previously inexplicable conduct. From this time the patient progressed slowly but steadily;

the wound was completely healed; and except that he had lost the power of moving the arm very far behind him, there was no reason to apprehend that the accident would be attended with permanent ill consequences.

CHAPTER XIII.

As long as Herbert was in danger, Brady had rarely left his room. Partly the fatigue of such constant nursing and partly her interest in the patient had quite subdued her loquacity, and for several weeks in succession she had hardly been heard to make any observations unconnected with the actual business of the sick chamber. Now however that all anxiety was over, and she could enjoy a few long nights of unbroken rest, that little member which has been styled unruly, regained its pristine vigour and activity, and began to make up for lost time. When Herbert

was disinclined to read, she would endeavour to amuse him with a detailed account of many of the circumstances connected with the private life of her deceased husband. Indeed we may venture to assert, that should the public display any great curiosity respecting the career of the late John Brady, it would be impossible to find any literary gentleman better able to undertake the task of writing his biography, than Herbert Campbell. We merely throw this out as a hint for any enterprising publisher who may like to follow it up.

"Lean on me, Master Herbert, please lean on me, sir, and I will help you quite comfortable to the chair by the winder."

It was in the first days of Herbert's convalescence that Martha made the above suggestion; and as Herbert was still very weak, he gladly availed himself of the proffered assistance.

"Thank you, Brady, that will do nicely," he said, as she punched up two or three pillows into the proper degree of consistency, and formed with them a sort of inner fortification, of which

the outworks consisted of the arms and back of a large easy chair.

"Thank you, Brady, that's capital."

Brady took her seat at a little distance, and began to herring-bone a flannel petticoat. "Oh dear, Master Herbert," said Brady, after a few minutes' silence, "oh dear, excuse me, sir, but you did give me such a turn." And Brady rolled her head from side to side, and looked as if she were about to faint.

"Why, what's the matter, Brady?"

"Oh, sir, you did look so like my John, just now. There's the look again, sir,—just as my John used to look after he had lost all his teeth and got the rheumatics."

Herbert smiled at the equivocal nature of the compliment.

"Ah, sir, his 'ealth was tried sadly by his clerical havocations. His feelins was too sensible, and every grave as he stood by, his 'eart was in it. When he gave it up, sir, was just when railways fust come in, and John thought he would try and get a place at one of them, as he

said he thought that walkin up and down with a lantern in his 'and was the sort of thing as he should like. But, says I to Brady, 'don't do it, Brady, I an't got no confidence in them railways yet, they an't got no consolidation, and one is always 'earing of accidents, and turning of the pints, and buffers and such like. Suppose, Brady, now,' said I, 'suppose they was to turn some of their pints into you, or one of their buffers was to bust and make me a widder now, I should like to know how I should ever find the sperrits to darn your stockings for you again!' And so Brady said, says he, 'you are right, Betsy, I didn't think of that.'"

"A great want of foresight, Brady."

"So it was, sir, so it was, but I can't abide railways. I tell you what it is, sir," continued Brady in a confidential tone, "I tell you what it is, they wants consolidation. That's it, sir; see how they goes runnin' and tearin' and screechin' about, all 'cause they wants consolidation. Railways and lawyers, sir; I can't abide 'em, and I never shall."

"So you don't like lawyers either, Brady?"

"I can't abide 'em, sir. Pray don't let Mr. Egerton be a lawyer, don't do it, sir, pray don't."

"I believe he has no such intentions, Brady."

"Well, I *am* glad of that," said Brady fervently, "them lawyers are a bad lot, a very bad lot; I don't think much of lawyers."

"Have you ever suffered by them?" said Herbert.

"Would you believe it," continued Brady, in a tone of profound moral indignation; "would you believe it, sir? why there's my niece, Susan Thomson, as nice spoken a young woman as ever you set eyes on, and her mother was a Brady, and that's the relationship, and though starch is riz so much lately, she makes your collars, sir, like boards, you might cut 'em with a saw, you might, and now, would you believe it, if that Walker ain't gone and took his washing away, and says his things ain't got up well enough, and he means to send 'em every week in a box to Lunnon, and have 'em washed there and sent

back again; and I should like very much to see the washerwoman as would get 'em up better than my Susan, I should, I would just give her a bit o' my mind, that's what I would."

"It's very sad, Brady, very sad."

"And now, sir, Susan is in sich a way, and it's quite natural she should; and she says it will be all over Stonecombe in a day or two. I believe it's them railways as is in it too, they want to have the carriage of the box, and they an't got no more 'eart nor feelin' in 'em than the lawyers, that they an't, and I said to Susan, says I, take 'eart, Susan, there's a dear, you've lost the washing of that Walker, but then an't you got Mr. Egerton's, and isn't it a providence as has brought him here, just as t'other one's gone? And so it *is*, sir, it *is* a providence, and I'm certain sure, that though he mayn't know it hisself, he is an unconscionable instrument, as has been sent here express that Susan may have his washin'."

At this instant there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Herbert.

The door opened, and the unconscionable instrument walked in.

"You may leave us now, Brady; I will ring when I want you."

"Very well, sir, very well." Then coming up close to Herbert, Brady said in a low voice, not intended for Egerton, "but *pray* don't let him be a lawyer, sir, or perhaps he'll get hisself a railway box too."

Herbert gave Mrs. Brady an encouraging nod, intended to imply that his personal influence should be exerted, if necessary, to prevent Egerton's entering on a course of legal study, and that lady feeling much re-assured, immediately left the room.

As soon as Brady was fairly out of earshot, Herbert indulged in a hearty fit of laughter. Egerton was delighted to see him in such good spirits, and inquired into the cause of his merriment.

"Ah, Egerton," said Herbert, "you little dream of the great part you are unconsciously

playing. Brady has just informed me that that respectable gentleman, Mr. Walker, has deposed her niece, Susan Thomson, from the honorable office of being his washerwoman, and assures me that she is convinced that you have been sent here to prevent any inconvenient falling off in that young lady's income. She says that, though you may not know it, you are an unconscionable instrument."

"Well," said Egerton laughing, "you know that some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. I suppose that I come under the last category."

"By the bye," said Herbert, "Brady's indignation against Mr. Walker has reminded me of my own. I think you should call on him to explain the abominable falsehoods he told you about our interview, because it is quite clear that he is an unprincipled knave, and it would be only right to unmask him to my uncle. He possesses a good deal of low cunning, and is a clever attorney in the bad sense of the expression. It has been his interest hitherto to keep on good

terms with my uncle, and he has transacted all his business with so much skill and promptitude as to gain his confidence. I confess this rather alarms me, for I am convinced that if circumstances should ever occur to make it appear his interest to betray the trust my uncle reposes in him, no scruples of conscience would make him hesitate a moment."

"Your opinion of him, though severe, is, I fear, no more than just. But the step you propose has its difficulties. In the first place I must learn what Walker has to say for himself; and then, assuming that he can make no defence, it is still rather a delicate matter to speak to your uncle about an affair in which his daughter is in any way mixed up. The first thing to be done, however, is to see Mr. Walker, and unless you particularly want me just now, I may as well call on him at once."

Herbert offered no objection, and Egerton left the room.

Mr. Walker was at home, and received Egerton with a certain easy air, as if he regarded

the visit as a little friendly act, having no relation to business of any kind. Egerton, however, was determined that there should be no possibility of a mistake on that score, and as soon as he had taken a chair commenced as follows:

"You will readily guess, Mr. Walker, the subject on which I wish to speak to you."

"Very glad to see you at any time, Mr. Egerton; esteem it a great honour, but as to any particular business, I really have no idea to what you allude. Ha! ha! ha! how dull I am to be sure. You want to raise a little money on a *post obit*, perhaps. Well, well, young men will be young men, and if I can be of any service to you in that way, I shall be most happy to number you among my clients."

This speech produced a curious tingling sensation in the toes of Egerton's right foot, a sensation instinctively prompting an almost spasmodic contraction of the muscles of the leg. Controlling the impulse, he stiffly replied:

"Nothing was further from my intention than to solicit your professional assistance. My

object in calling on you is to learn on what grounds you told me that Mr. Herbert Campbell had imagined yourself to be attached to Miss Mary Campbell, and that I supported your pretensions, when so far from that being the fact, you yourself told him that I had paid attentions to that lady."

"I told him that you paid attentions to Miss Mary Campbell!" exclaimed Mr. Walker with well-feigned astonishment. "I can't conceive what he means, I never heard anything so absurd in my life! Ah, now I see it all," he continued. "You will recollect, Mr. Egerton, that my interview with Mr. Herbert, was on the same day that his fever came on, and that he became delirious."

"I have only too much reason to remember that coincidence, sir."

"I don't know what you mean to insinuate, Mr. Egerton, but this I *do* know, that Mr. Herbert Campbell's manner was extremely violent from the beginning; indeed it was on that account that you interrupted the interview

before it had lasted five minutes. I felt convinced from the first, that his mind was wandering, and his manner made the same impression on yourself, as indeed you stated to me the instant we left the room. Now I say that it is perfectly evident, that in the state of his intellect at that moment, he has made the most ridiculous confusion between persons; nor indeed should I be much surprised, if in the course of his delirium he has believed that Dr. Freeman was in love with Brady. Ha, ha, ha! That's not a bad idea. Fancy Brady becoming Mrs. Freeman. But joking apart, Mr. Egerton, my answer to your imputation, which I must confess I had not expected, no—I had not indeed, I feel hurt, sir, much hurt, but I was going to say, my answer is contained in one word, and that is, —delirium. You remember, Mr. Egerton, what Tully says in his second Philippic,

Mens sana in corpore sano,

Men are sane in a sound body, thus implying with that elegance peculiar to him, that where

the physical system is deranged, the mind goes too. And now Mr. Egerton, as I flatter myself I have fully satisfied you of my strict adherence to truth in this little matter, suppose we change the subject. Have you seen the *Times* this morning?"

"Unfortunately for your statement, sir, you spoke to Mr. Herbert Campbell, on the road to Oakwood, on the Saturday before his accident, and you then insinuated that I was paying attentions to Miss Mary Campbell, and it was this statement which you repeated on the day of that second most unfortunate meeting."

"Better and better, Mr. Egerton! Why there is enough here for a second comedy of errors. No, that is really too absurd. Now, Mr. Egerton," continued Mr. Walker, gravely, "some men under such circumstances as the present, would take up high ground; and to be quite frank with you, you are putting my good humour to a rather severe trial. But I will honestly confess it, I liked you from the first moment I saw you; I said to myself 'that's just the man

after John Walker's own heart,' and it is for this reason, and for this alone, that I will enter into explanations which I should not condescend to offer to another man.

"Mr. Herbert Campbell has spoken to you of a little conversation I had with him on the road to Oakwood prior to his accident. Such a conversation did unquestionably take place; but it appears that he has not given its purport correctly. In a casual way your name was mentioned, and I observed that you had shewn good taste, and, excuse me for saying so, bad taste also. I further hinted that your good taste was displayed in your admiration for a certain lady, meaning thereby Miss Campbell, and the bad taste in your not preferring another lady who had been supposed to look kindly on a certain young gentleman not a hundred miles off, and I was then alluding to Miss Mary Campbell, and to Mr. Herbert himself. I said this in great measure to please him. Now it appears that by one of those tricks which the imagination plays the wisest of us when we are suffering from the

lamentable effects of fever, he has afterwards confounded the persons, and supposed that I had told him that *I* was pretending to Miss Mary's hand. This may have arisen from my having intimated my own opinion as to the relative merits of the ladies. But really it is fit for a play, sir; and if it were not too painful for me to dwell on the weakness of a friend, I should almost feel inclined to devote a few hours of my literary leisure to giving the subject a dramatic form. But pray excuse my neglect. Can I offer you anything? You recollect what Horace says—*Vires acquiro bibendo.* Will you take a glass of sherry?"

"No, thank you," said Egerton, coldly. "I have now heard your defence, and I think it is as well to observe before I leave you, that Mr. Herbert Campbell was not delirious till some hours after you left him, and that at both interviews you intimated to him that I was paying attentions to the younger Miss Campbell. This conviction in my mind is founded on unquestionable evidence, nor has it been in the least shaken

by the story you have trumped up to cover your abominable falsehood."

"Trumped up, Mr. Egerton! Abominable falsehood! Why, there is not a single jury in the country, sir,—no, not a single juryman—who would listen for an instant to such evidence as that with which you are now attempting to assail the character of a respectable attorney. You come to me, sir, with a cock and bull story, that you have put together out of the ravings of a delirious man, and think to brow-beat me with your accusations of falsehood, and heaven knows what besides. You would be hissed out of court, sir, that's what you would. Trumped up indeed!"

Egerton smiled, and wished Mr. Walker good morning. He immediately returned to Oakwood to communicate to Herbert the result of his interview with the wily attorney. After a very short consultation, Herbert and Egerton came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to denounce Mr. Walker's machinations to Mr. Campbell, partly on account of the cunning of

his defence, and partly on account of the manner in which the names of both the ladies must necessarily be introduced. They accordingly agreed to let the matter drop for the present, but to keep a watch on Mr. Walker's conduct, and to lose no opportunity of opening Mr. Campbell's eyes to the nature of his character, should any present itself.

As soon as Mr. Walker had seen Egerton fairly out of the house, he threw himself into his easy chair in front of the fireless grate, and assuming his favorite position (that of a foot on each hob) was soon absorbed in his meditations. That they were agreeable on the whole may be assumed from the smile of self-complacency that played about his features. Their general purport may be partly gathered from the following broken soliloquy:

"You are sharp, Egerton, my boy, but it won't do—it won't indeed. I know a trick worth two of that. I flatter myself you won't knock down my defence in a hurry. Pity I

didn't go to the bar. Catch a weasel asleep, sir, and then perhaps you may find Mr. Walker napping. You must get up a little earlier in the morning, sir, if you are going to try a game with me. And the best of the joke is, they can't tell the old gent, because they know he would not be best pleased to have his two pretty daughters lugged into a bit of Stonecombe gossip. That dear little Bertha, too! What a pretty girl she is to be sure! Aye, there's the rub. Somehow or other he *must* be got rid of. As long as he is there, I shall never get on with the pretty little smiling rogue. Confound her, how she does laugh at me! Well, well, if I can only keep straight with the old one, I may have a day of reckoning with the daughter yet. Not that I could treat her badly though—no, I could not for the life of me. I am not much given to to the sentimental, but I do love that girl—I do, by Jove! However, when she is once Mrs. Walker, there shall soon be an end to that grinning. But then comes the old question

—how to make her Mrs. Walker? First, to get rid of that young Cambridge puppy! Let me see—let me see."

Here Mr. Walker indulged in silent cogitation for the space of about ten minutes, at the end of which he rang the bell.

A slipshod young damsel soon appeared at the door.

"Tell Jones I shall want the gig in an hour. Get me a mutton chop as quickly as you can, and put up some things in my carpet-bag, as I shall probably not come home to-night."

"Is Jones to go too, sir?"

"No, I shall not want him."

CHAPTER XIV.

FORTIFIED with the mutton chops, a slice of Stilton, and a few glasses of sherry, Mr. Walker got into his gig, and drove out of Stonecombe on the road to B——. About two miles from the town he turned off into a bye-road, and by a somewhat circuitous route of six or seven miles reached another high road, which led in a nearly opposite direction to that which he had taken at first. He had thus driven eight miles to reach a point only half that distance from his residence, a somewhat curious proceeding, but one for which he probably had his reasons. He

then continued his journey for about sixteen miles farther, avoiding, however, the little town of Hilderton, by a second small circuit of a couple of miles. This brought him into the neighbourhood of Hebworth Abbey, a fine old country seat, belonging to Sir Roderick Egerton. After having passed the lodge gate for about a mile, he turned into a lane, and drove up to a comfortable looking farm house, at that time occupied by a certain Mr. Joseph Highlow, formerly a farmer, but at that time discharging the office of bailiff to Sir Roderick.

"Ah, Mr. Highlow," said Walker, "I am delighted to find you at home. You have so many important avocations as bailiff to Sir Roderick, that I may consider myself in luck."

"Good evening, Mr. Walker; good evening, sir. Dick, Dick," shouted Mr. Highlow, "just put up Mr. Walker's horse, will you. We don't see you very often, sir, in our part of the country, so I hope you will stay to supper. My wife will be quite delighted."

"Thank you," said Walker, as he entered the

house, "thank you, I will accept your invitation most willingly. And how is Mrs. Highlow, and how are all your young people? Why, God bless me, I do believe that that is your eldest boy, John! How he is grown, to be sure! I should not have known him. I positively should not have recognised John if I had seen him anywhere else. How like he is to you, Mr. Highlow! Yes, I see now, I should have known him by the likeness. He has the regular Highlow mouth and eyes."

"Well, sir, I believe he is like me; but there are a many people as say he is more like his mother."

"Perhaps he *has* something of the Galosh nose," said Mr. Walker, gazing with an air of tender admiration at John's pug, "but still on the whole he is much more like you. Dear me," continued Mr. Walker, "How well I do remember Mrs. Highlow when she was Miss Galosh! Sad work she made in those days among the Hilderton gentlemen, and upon my honour, I don't think she looks two years older

now; at least she didn't when I saw her last spring."

Here Mrs. Highlow entered the room from another smaller one adjoining, and gave Mr. Walker a friendly greeting. The door between the two rooms had been open, and we cannot help entertaining some slight suspicion that Mr. Walker's last words had been heard by the lady to whom they referred. Of course we may be mistaken; but about her face there was a certain pleased expression, accompanied by an amount of colour which we cannot entirely explain as occasioned by the culinary operations which she had just been superintending.

"Ah, how d'ye do, Mrs. Highlow? We were just talking about you; I won't repeat what passed, but it wasn't treason. And how is baby? Ah! bless it, there it is. What! fractious from teething, do you say! Well, it *is* a trying time, both for mothers and children, but it can't be helped. Peep bo," said Mr. Walker, hiding his face with his hat, and then disclosing it to the small but delighted Highlow;

"peep bo, baby, peep bo. Kitcher, kitcher, kitcher, kitcher," he continued, poking his forefinger into the body of a small frock, which was more moist than pleasant. "Kitcher, kitcher, kitcher, kitcher. What a dear little duck it is! Dear me, how completely he has the Galosh eyes; and in spite of what you say about teething, he is really looking very well."

"It is not a boy, it is a girl, sir," simpered Mrs. Highlow.

"Oh, of course. How stupid of me! I meant she all the time. Well it *is* a pretty baby; it is a lovely girl. How true that line is of Pope's! You are a reader, Mr. Highlow," continued Mr. Walker, glancing at a Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress supported on a large bible, with a tea-tray for the back ground, and the whole resting on a chest of drawers of considerable antiquity, "you are a reader, and will remember it:

'A pretty babe's the noblest work of God.'"

"That's not it," said John, "that's not it. I

know better nor that. Father's got a Pope, and it is:

'An honest man's the noblest work of God.'"

"Confound the young savage's literary precocity," thought Mr. Walker. "Ah, yes, John, I believe you are right; clever boy, clever boy! You see he knew it directly, Mrs. Highlow; but then, John, my boy, it comes to the same thing in the end, you know, because the honest man has been a pretty babe once, and a pretty babe is sure to become an honest man, I mean, at least, should no difficulties on the score of sex intervene. Indeed I think in my edition, which is the one edited by the rare Ben Jonson, it stands 'a pretty babe.' At any rate it is the finer reading. Don't you think so, Mrs. Highlow?"

"Well, perhaps it is, sir."

"Now, Mr. Walker, will you sit down and take a bit of supper with us; it an't much of a one, but—"

"My dear Mr. Highlow, no apologies, there

is nothing I like better than a steak, indeed there *is* nothing better."

Mr. Walker did ample justice to the sentiment he had just uttered, and was so affable and talkative, that all the Highlows young and old, were delighted. After the meal was concluded, Mr. Highlow asked him where he intended to sleep.

"Well, the fact is," said Mr. Walker, "I want to have a little private chat with you, and then I thought of driving on to Diddleton and getting a bed at the Puss in Boots."

A series of telegraphic communications, executed rather on the old semaphore than the electric system. was here commenced between Mr. and Mrs. Highlow.

Mr. Walker was evidently not aware of what was going on, as he seemed absorbed in the occupation of bringing all the crumbs on the table cloth into a perfectly straight line with the back of his knife.

"Perhaps, Mr. Walker, you would do us the honour of taking a bed here," said Mrs. Highlow,

"it isn't very magnificent, sir, but such as it is, you are heartily welcome."

"Nothing I should like better. I accept your kind offer most gratefully. I did not much like the notion of turning out again to-night, I can tell you; I never refuse a good offer, Mrs. Highlow, never, it's a principle of mine."

"Well, then, sir, I'll wish you a good night and go and tell Sairey to see that the sheets are well aired, and all comfortable."

"Good night, Mrs. Highlow; and pray oblige me by not getting too anxious about that dear baby of yours. He—I beg pardon—I mean she is only a little pale from teething, you know, nothing more. Good night, John, my boy. Why, you are quite a scholar. Know Pope already! A sort of phenomenon."

"Take a pipe, sir?" said the bailiff.

"Thank ye; if you'll allow me, I'll light a cigar."

The bailiff lighted a long clay, and both gentlemen began to smoke.

"And now to business, Mr. Highlow. The

fact is, it's rather confidential, but I know I may trust *you*. You will soon see that I cannot mention names, but one or two clients of mine, call them A and B if you like, are tenants of another gentleman, whom we will call Mr. C. Now A and B have been voting with the radicals, indeed, as tenants of Mr. C. they can't well do otherwise, but t ey are by no means very radical in their hearts. They do not much like Mr. C. as a landlord either, and have told me in confidence there is nothing they would prefer to becoming tenants of a good old tory, like Sir Roderick. But following the old proverb, Mr. Highlow, that one should never be off with the old love until one is on with the new, they don't like to give notice that they will throw up their leases until they have found out whether Sir Roderick would have them. They have therefore commissioned me to find out, if I can, what Sir Roderick's intentions are about the Lea farm and the Chesham Wood farm, both of which I hear will be on Sir Roderick's hands before long. I can't mention names at present,

you know, for the reason I stated, but I can assure you of one thing, that Sir Roderick would have two very respectable tenants, and men who would work heart and soul with him in the elections."

"Well, Mr. Walker, Sir Roderick has not said nothing to me about his intentions respecting them farms. Indeed, I havn't got much to do with the lettings anywise. But if so be the case as you would wish me to ask him in a quiet way like, perhaps I could manage it somehow, and let you know what he says."

"Thank you, Mr. Highlow, that's just what I want. I live in a dreadfully radical place; it's really quite shocking. I am a liberal you know, a moderate liberal, but really such sentiments as I hear sometimes at Mr. Campbell's table, why, sir, they almost make my hair stand on end. I can't make out how any ministry can leave such a dreadful democrat in the commission of the peace. It is such a bad example to the neighbourhood too. However, I have had one advantage lately in meeting young Mr. Egerton

there. He has been getting more radical than ever he was. More's the pity—such a fine young man! It positively makes my blood run cold to hear the leveling revolutionary doctrines that that pretty Miss Campbell talks at him too. Ah, that's it, Mr. Highlow; that's it, you see, sir. It's the women that makes such fools of us all. And, between us two, I may mention to you in confidence, that he is looking very sweet upon Miss Campbell—very sweet indeed, sir. But of course you won't hint at such a thing to Sir Roderick," continued Mr. Walker, looking very hard at the bailiff; "of course you won't. I have not a doubt, though, Sir Roderick would give worlds to know it—worlds, sir. How indeed should he, an old Baronet, whose title must date from the Edwards at least, how, I say, should he allow his son to marry the granddaughter of a Glasgow merchant? It's out of the question. Blood of course must marry blood; it stands to reason."

"But ain't there time to stop it, sir?" said Mr. Highlow.

"Time! Oh, yes, plenty, if one did but know how to set about it. I am sure Sir Roderick would give his eyes rather than that a son of his should disgrace himself in that way; but he has not got an idea of what is going on. Besides, between ourselves, this Miss Campbell is such an artful little hussy, that it is not as if she would really ever make Mr. Henry Egerton happy. I declare I am quite grieved at it—quite pained, I may say, Mr. Highlow; but what can I do? However, all this is nothing to the purpose. I merely tell it you in confidence, but of course you won't mention it again to Sir Roderick, nor to any of the servants in confidence. And with regard to Mr. Campbell, why he is such a regular out and out radical, that it is quite impossible for such men as B and C to hold of him any longer. I dine sometimes at his table, sir, and it's awful to hear how he and his daughter go on—quite awful."

Mr. Highlow appeared to have been engaged in deep reflection. At last he said:

"Mix yourself another tumbler, sir. It is as fine old Jamaica as you'll often get, I'll be bound."

"Thank ye, Mr. Highlow. It's the right stuff, and no mistake. I will take your advice."

"And so, Mr. Walker, this Miss Campbell is not exactly first-rate, you say?"

"I'll tell you what it is, Highlow; she is a designing, artful, worldly little puss. She is only looking after the baronetcy, and wants to be 'my lady,' and all that sort of thing. But if Henry Egerton were a poor man to-morrow, you would soon see whether she would not send him off—double quick time, too. I hate such designing people; I like to have everything honest and above board, you know. It's her being so designing that vexes me so. And then the worst is, she is so pretty; she has regularly turned young Egerton's head. Oh, dear! oh, dear! I wish I knew how to save him! But as I have no acquaintance with Sir Roderick, I don't see how to manage it. When you speak to Sir Roderick about the farms, you won't, of

course, say anything about all this, Highlow, because I tell it you, in confidence."

"Of course not, sir," replied Mr. Highlow, in a tone rather too decided to please Mr. Walker.

"Poor Sir Roderick," continued Mr. Walker, "he has not an idea of it. It will be a dreadful blow, and then if she should ever become lady of Hebworth, a nice life you will all have of it here. Why it is not above three years ago since she teazed her old father into dismissing his bailiff;—that's what she did. And the man had been on the estate seventeen years, Highlow; think of that, and as good and honest a fellow as ever was seen. And what for? Simply because in one of her tantrums she took it into her ladyship's head that he answered her impertinently, and he all the time one of the quietest, civillest spoken men in the whole county. Ah," continued Mr. Walker, "I am afraid she will lead him a precious life."

"It's positively dreadful," said Mr. Highlow, much excited. "It's shocking, sir; I shan't sleep a wink to-night for thinking of it."

"Ah, if Sir Roderick did but know it," said Mr. Walker. "I should say now, looking at his character and position, I should say he would be grateful for ever after, to the man that should help to save his son from such a mis-alliance."

"Miss who, sir?" said Mr. Highlow, "I thought you said Miss Campbell, not Miss Alliance, sir."

"Yes, yes, I did, Highlow. Mis-alliance *with* Miss Campbell," said Mr. Walker, rather absently, not having quite understood the bailiff's difficulty.

"With Miss Campbell, *too*! Why, God bless me, sir, it's worse and worse; it's absolutely horrid."

Mr. Highlow, in his imagination, already saw Egerton summoned before the bench to answer a charge of bigamy.

"When you speak to Sir Roderick about the farms, Highlow, you won't drop out a hint that you have heard people talk about Mr. Egerton being a great deal at Oakwood, and that he has

been supposed to have found some great attraction there, and that there is nothing but Radicalism talked in the house, and all that sort of thing. *Don't* do that, you know, Highlow."

"Of course not," said Highlow very faintly.

"And now, as I have had a long drive, and am rather tired, if you will allow me, I will go to bed. Good night, good night."

"I flatter myself, Mr. Henry Egerton, you won't beat that move in a hurry," said Mr. Walker to himself, as he put out his candle and got into bed.

Perhaps, reader, you may have thought Mr. Walker was deficient in poetical imagination. If so, you have utterly failed to appreciate his intellectual gifts. Is not the moral indignation at their political servitude, which burnt in the breasts of B. and C. a fine idea? And yet the very existence of those much wronged British yeomen was a mere creation of Mr. Walker's too lively fancy. It is well known that Russian regiments often have a mere paper existence. B. and C. had not even that, and yet a few days

after the above conversation, they formed the subject of another which took place between Sir Roderick and Mr. Highlow, at the end of which the bailiff nervously let drop sundry hints about —but no, we were nearly going to be as indiscreet as Mr. Highlow himself. Let us rather draw a veil over the little weaknesses of that amiable man.

CHAPTER XV.

DURING the few weeks that Egerton was domesticated at Oakwood Hall, he spent nearly the whole of his time in Herbert's room. This, of course, did not prevent his enjoying frequent intervals of intercourse with the other members of the family, but they were generally of short duration, and for the most part restricted to the time occupied by meals or by an occasional hasty turn in the garden. Mr. Campbell could be extremely amiable when his will was not thwarted, or his opinion strongly opposed; and as circumstances had not placed him in any antagonistic

relations with Egerton, but rather the reverse, he conceived a strong liking for him which he took no pains to conceal. Sometimes indeed he almost seemed to grudge Herbert his monopoly of his friend's company, and would occasionally press Egerton to join himself and daughters in their rides, urging that a too close confinement to the house would be injurious to his health, and that Brady might safely be entrusted with the care of Herbert for a couple of hours. Tempting as such invitations were, Egerton manfully refused them, as long as there was the least serious symptom remaining in Herbert's case; and the manifest self-sacrifice of the act entirely disarmed any irritation which Mr. Campbell might otherwise have felt at this trifling opposition to his wishes. What little exercise Egerton did take, consisted principally in the short walks in the garden already alluded to, which however rarely exceeded a quarter of an hour in length. These he generally enjoyed after luncheon or dinner, and in the company of both the sisters, but occasionally of one of them alone. Perhaps

it would have been impossible to devise any arrangement more calculated to nourish the feeling with which Miss Campbell had almost unconsciously regarded Egerton from the commencement of their acquaintance, than these short snatches of intercourse under such circumstances. The almost daily alternation of hopes and fears respecting Herbert's progress, and the intense interest which all in that house felt in his recovery, formed a point of deep sympathy between himself and both the sisters which could hardly fail to leave lasting results. Gratitude mingled with admiration, was the sentiment entertained towards him by each; but in Mary the former feeling predominated, in Bertha the latter. When Mary saw the ready devotion with which he sacrificed days and nights to alleviate the pain, or cheer the sadness of the man she loved best on earth, the tears would start unbidden to her eyes, and she would feel a fulness at her heart to which no words could have given adequate expression. But the different relation in which Bertha stood to

Herbert, made her regard Egerton's many acts of kindness from a different point of view. To her, Egerton was the strong man with high aims, ardent aspirations, and intellectual powers giving an earnest of their fulfilment, forgetting them all for the moment in the one feeling, that the friend whom he loved was sick and needed his consolation and support. No one would have blamed him, had he confined his visits to a few short visits daily, and had left the actual care of the invalid to female hands. Some, indeed, on the contrary, would have praised him for not sacrificing valuable time, perhaps even his prospects of success at the University, to the performance of offices which Brady could have performed as well.

But Bertha felt that the deeper instinct, and the stronger love, had broken through all such thin meshes of cold and worldly argument, and had never left a shade of doubt in Egerton's mind, as to where his place must be at such a time. The conduct that had touched Bertha's feelings so deeply, though the result of an un-

selfish and unconscious impulse, tallied in reality with the dictates of a higher prudence. With the objects that he had proposed to himself in life, no amount of facts and figures could ever compensate in value for the infinite gain of those long long nights of lonely watching, and the deep and tender thoughts they left behind. For human affection there is no such thing as the purely abstract, and the love that is to be comprehensive in its range, must also be intense and uncalculating in its individual manifestations. The philanthropist who spends a few hours in endeavouring to amuse his sick child, may have done more to arm himself for the solution of social questions, than had he passed the same time in the cold and solitary meditation of his study. He may know less, but he looks at what he knows from a higher point and with an intenser vision. The intellect without the heart is but a poor lopsided craft at best; and if we attempt any voyage of discovery through the humanities that bound our lives, in so crazy a vessel, shipwreck and utter failure will be our inevitable lot.

But if the circumstances under which Egerton met Bertha during his stay at Oakwood, were calculated to cherish a feeling far deeper and warmer than either had ever experienced before, they were by no means equally favourable to the more direct and personal forms of its exhibition. In the first place, Mary's great interest in Herbert, had made her always anxious to pass with Egerton the few minutes that he was absent from the sick room, so that he and Bertha were rarely alone; and then again the absorbing character of their common point of sympathy, would have made anything like the display of more selfish and personal feelings at such a time seem jarring and out of place.

It would perhaps be hardly too much to say, that the more deeply Egerton seemed engrossed with his friend, and the less with herself, the purer was the veneration with which Bertha regarded his character, and the deeper the feeling in which his image was enshrined in her heart. Bertha's love had given her whole nature a warmth and intensity to which it had hitherto

been a stranger; but in the first days of its young life she was hardly conscious to what the change was to be attributed. Some new phase of being had opened upon her; but what it was she hardly dared to ask. She felt that while tripping gaily and heedlessly along the bright summer ways, a gulf had suddenly yawned in the path before her—a gulf to which she must speed onwards, but on which she dared not gaze, for it contained her fate.

Whether it were to prove a rapid torrent to hurry her onwards to an abyss of misery undreamt of before, or a peaceful stream to bear her little bark to a haven of rest surpassing in beauty the brightest visions she had formed to herself in her happiest hours—this was an alternative she had not the courage to contemplate.

But the time of this dim half-consciousness was drawing to an end, and she could no longer conceal from herself that she had met with him, whom alone of men she could call her master. It was with a thrill of joy, though accompanied

by a vague terror, that in the solitude of her own chamber she confessed her love to her own heart. She was conscious of no wrong in the treasured thought, for as far as words and acts could shew it at such a time, he had given her every reason to believe that she was no less dear to him than he to her. Her father, whom she loved most tenderly, in spite of all the trials to which his temper had subjected her, had also recognised the manly, noble character of Herbert's friend, and had never dropped a word from which she could anticipate any disapprobation of her choice. Neither, indeed, did he feel any, for a very short acquaintance had led him to the conclusion, that there was no man to whose care he would sooner intrust his daughter's happiness than Henry Egerton.

At first her joy was the stronger feeling, as it always was the deeper; but still sometimes in the dead of the night the dread would come over her, and grow and grow in breadth and force, till it seemed to crush her with its overwhelming weight. She might have altogether

mistaken the meaning of the various little acts on which her belief in his love was built. They were, perhaps, but the general kindness of his large and noble heart. How, indeed, could one whose daily thoughts always seemed to soar at such an immeasurable height above her own, stoop to the level of her petty joys and sorrows, hopes and fears? But then she would remember that though her thoughts were not as high, her affection might be as deep, and she was conscious that such love as hers was no valueless gift. Sometimes, indeed, the morning sun would chase away her nightly phantoms, but the recollection of them would leave her cheek a shade paler than before, and her smile would lose somewhat of its former brightness. Her greatest fear was lest by any chance word or look she might betray her feelings before she knew they were justified by his. And thus it was that she often avoided his society from no other motive than a nervous anxiety lest others should perceive the value she attached to it.

It was about this time that Herbert had suf-

ficiently recovered to allow of his removal to the Vicarage, and Egerton being now released from his former duties, was able to accept Mr. Campbell's invitation to join himself and his daughters in their country rides. He had looked forward to these opportunities of meeting Bertha with the greatest anxiety, partly from the deep joy he took in her mere presence, even though no words passed between them, and partly because he hoped to gather from her manner sufficient encouragement to put an end to a suspense which had now become intolerable. His disappointment, therefore, may easily be conceived when, on riding up to the Hall on the first of these occasions, he saw only one horse with a lady's saddle standing at the door, and that one, alas! no other than Mary's chesnut.

"Is not Bertha going with us?" asked Mr. Campbell.

"No, she has gone into Stonecombe to see Mrs. Maddison," said Mary. "I tried to persuade her that to-morrow morning would do as well, but she said that she had neglected her

lately, and would rather not put off her visit any longer."

Egerton's feelings towards Mrs. Maddison at this moment were by no means of a very charitable nature. It was not, however, his disappointment at the loss of a single ride in Bertha's company that annoyed him so much, as the bad omen he drew from it for his future hopes. "Were she the least of a coquette," thought he, "I might have attributed her absence to less unfavourable causes; but with her I know it has some deeper ground. If she had felt for me one tenth of the love I feel for her, she would have allowed no trifling impediment to interfere with this meeting. But no, I see how it is. She has perceived my feelings, and has purposely avoided me to let me understand that she cannot return them."

Egerton felt so completely dashed by this discovery, that it was some time before he could recover even the merest semblance of his usual spirits. Neither his absence of mind nor its cause escaped Mr. Campbell, who felt rather

gratified than the reverse. In the first place he was pleased at Bertha's absence on the occasion of the first ride, as it entirely destroyed all appearance of his intentionally bringing her and Egerton together; and in the second he was gratified at the effect which that absence had produced on Egerton, as it convinced him that his previous suspicions were well founded.

But Bertha could not always find a Mrs. Maddison to call on, nor did she wish to avoid Egerton any more than was necessary to conceal the intensity of the feelings with which she regarded him. It frequently happened, therefore, that when Egerton rode up to Oakwood, his eyes were gladdened with the sight of two side-saddles awaiting their fair occupants instead of one. But even then his satisfaction proved by no means without alloy, for Bertha would frequently manage to engage her father in conversation, and in such a manner as to make her riding with him a necessity, while Mary was left to the care of Egerton, who generally proved a very dull companion. Sometimes, however, by a little

manœuvring, Egerton would succeed in bringing about a different division of the party, and in securing Bertha to himself. But the conversation did not take the same tone as in the earlier days of their acquaintance. Sometimes Bertha seemed determined that they should keep to commonplace subjects, sometimes she surrounded herself with an impenetrable barrier of reserve. Something like an abnegation of their former intercourse became on her part most painfully evident, and he began to fear that if he had ever possessed any power over her heart, he had now lost it for ever. Little did he dream that it was precisely the consciousness of the absolute sway which he exercised over her every thought, that had obliged her to have recourse to this cold exterior, as her only means of self-defence. The intercourse between them had thus become trying to both in a high degree. Its gloom, however, was occasionally dispersed by a gleam of light, when Bertha, forgetting her stern resolve, allowed herself to be drawn into conversation of a more earnest character. The blood would

mantle in her cheek, and the light would flash from her dark eyes as she listened in silence, to words that seemed to burn their traces in her heart for ever. They were generally simple in themselves, but they bore with them the impress of lofty aim and conscious power, and left the hearer under the conviction that there was far more behind than all that was expressed.

It was Mr. Campbell's usual custom to ride soon after luncheon. On one occasion, however, about a fortnight after Herbert's removal, a servant came from the Hall with a message requesting Mr. Egerton to join the riding party at eleven o'clock.

He readily accepted the invitation, and as he got on his horse and cantered off to Oakwood, he registered a secret vow that he would take Bertha's manner on that day as a guide for his future conduct. On reaching the house he was much disappointed to find that Miss Campbell was not to be of the party.

"This," said he to himself, "is the omen I sought; she may have liked me a little at first,

but she has changed her opinion, has regretted that anything in her manner should have seemed like encouragement, and is now determined to undeceive me."

Egerton exercised all the self-command in his power, during those two dull hours, and endeavoured to conceal the bitterness of his feelings in the light, easy tone of his conversation. When they returned to Oakwood, Mr. Campbell politely asked him in to luncheon. His first impulse was to decline the invitation.

"Why should I protract these torments?" thought he, "and simply waste my time and strength in the pursuit of what I can never attain?"

And then the idea flashed across him, that it would be miserably weak to surrender his dearest hopes so easily, and that, after all it might have been some real cause which prevented Bertha from riding that morning. He accordingly accepted Mr. Campbell's invitation, and having assisted Mary to alight from her horse, followed her into the house.

"Bertha," said Mary, "I am so sorry you were not with us, we have had such a delightful ride, only that papa thought that Brown Bess went a little lame when we got near home. Mr. Egerton has told us so many amusing stories about Cambridge life, that we have had a great deal of laughing. I wanted to know if Herbert ever played such wild pranks, and Mr. Egerton says that he does not; but I don't feel quite satisfied, and mean to investigate the subject more particularly. But, dear me, how pale you look, Bertha! I am afraid you have been overdoing yourself."

"Oh, no, thank you," said Bertha hastily, "it's true I have had a rather long walk in Stonecombe."

"Whom have you seen?"

"I went first to Mr. White, to speak about the holiday his boys are to have next week in the park, and to know what preparations we should have to make; then I went to see Mrs. Smith's little boy who tumbled off a ladder last week, and broke his arm; then I—but I can give

you the rest of the history another time; there is no reason why I should trouble Mr. Egerton with an account of all the halt, maimed, and indigent in Stonecombe who want assistance."

"I assure you I take a great interest in such matters, Miss Campbell; but I am afraid you must have a very large visiting acquaintance, and must have made a very long round this morning, if you have called on all who want your assistance."

"Why, as to that," said Mary, "I never knew anything like the change in Bertha in that respect. Formerly she used to do very little in the visiting way, and now she has taken far more than her share of the work upon herself. As Herbert has been disabled this summer, it was particularly lucky. Ever since Herbert came home, Bertha has entered into all my parish business in quite a different spirit, and now she has almost supplanted me with many of my *protegés*; indeed, I begin to be quite jealous."

Mary had looked towards Egerton at the beginning of this speech; but just at the end of

it, she glanced at her sister. Bertha was scarlet; she seemed quite overpowered with the sense of shame. Mary was so shocked when she thus suddenly perceived her sister's extreme distress, that she uttered a faint exclamation; but becoming instantly aware that anything which would attract the attention of others to this most unexpected effect of her words would only make matters a great deal worse, she instantly turned the conversation by asking Egerton some questions about Cambridge.

A few minutes afterwards, Bertha having finished her luncheon, left the room. Before she had crossed the hall, she felt Mary's arm round her neck, and saw her looking up sadly into her face.

"Oh, dear, dear Bertha," she cried, "what have I said that has made you so miserable? I am so sorry, so very sorry; but I cannot conceive what it was that hurt you so. I only mentioned that you have begun to visit the poor now more regularly than before."

"Never mind, Mary; you cannot understand

it now. I know you meant no harm. Only let me go now, love; I want to be alone a little while."

And Bertha gently disentwined herself from Mary's arms, and ran up to her room.

Egerton had seen Bertha's blush, and it had suggested thoughts that made his heart beat high. Mary's words alone would never have received an explanation so flattering to his hopes, but Mary's words, interpreted by Bertha's tell-tale blush, were evidence strong as holy writ.

"That blush be my omen," said he to himself, "I wish none other. If I can only find the opportunity, this day shall end my doubts."

When, a few minutes afterwards, he rose from the table with this valiant resolve, he saw a lady's dress disappear in the shrubbery, at no great distance from the house. Breaking off the conversation, and taking leave of Mr. Campbell and Mary somewhat abruptly, he caught up his hat and hurried off in the direction of the Willow Walk.

"She has gone to the oaks at the end of the Willow Walk," he said to himself. "I have very little doubt that I shall find her there, and then I will draw an answer from those dear lips that shall extract the sting from her burning blush, and end this torture of suspense for me. And even if she will not hear me, I shall at least have proved to her that no influence of mine on her feelings and conduct can outweigh hers on mine."

He strode on at a rapid pace, and reached the lawn, but Bertha was nowhere to be seen. He sat down on the bench near the end of the walk, and watched the oaks and the open space around them with an eager eye, but in vain; no Bertha appeared.

He struck off into the labyrinth and passed and repassed all its various mazes, but not a glimpse did he catch of the object of his search. He heard a slight noise behind him, and thought it was the rustle of a lady's dress. He turned round quickly, but only to be disappointed;—it was but a hare that had been frightened from

her form at his approach, and had timidly crossed the path to hide herself in the thicket. The very difficulty of finding her had roused his determination till the mere search had become a passion. He left the labyrinth and hurried along as if pursued by some tormenting spirit till he had visited every part of the grounds, but all in vain. He returned to the Willow Walk by another path, avoiding the neighbourhood of the house, for he knew the oaks to be her favourite haunt, and thought that perhaps she might have gone there since he had left it. But still without success,—Bertha was not there "She has been here though, for here is her glove," he exclaimed, as he caught up the precious relic from the bench. He walked to the little pavilion on the cliff, and gazed upon the sea. Far as the eye could reach he searched the shore with a piercing glance, and still without success. The intense excitement of his feelings added to the ardour of his search sent the blood tingling through his veins, and made his temples throb with the heat of fever. Ah! What is that

slight figure just turning the last point of the cliff, and now concealed again by the projecting precipice? A few moments' quick walking brought him to the steep descent, half path, half staircase, that offered the nearest means of reaching the beach. He knew that just beyond that point, in a niche of the rock, and sheltered by the lofty cliff, there was a little bench called "The Solitude," which from its lonely situation, well deserved the name it bore. That she should have sought this spot just now, was certainly no reason for discouragement, and with a flushed brow, and throbbing pulse, he hurried along the yielding shingle.

Bertha sat alone on the little bench. She could see nothing but the high rocks around her, and the blue expanse before her. It was a spot as wild as it was solitary, but it suited her mood. She was deadly pale, and a few bitter tears had coursed down her marble cheek. Never had she felt so abased before man as on that day, and she sought a balm for her wounded pride in solitary commune with God and her own heart.

So entirely had the consciousness of her one great secret overpowered every other feeling, that when Mary, by her unfortunate allusion had merely approached its sacred precincts, it seemed to her as if the veil had been rudely torn away from her woman's heart, and its most treasured thought exposed to public gaze. What would he think of her now,—of her who had loved him unasked,—who had taken his words as her guide,—had even allowed his influence to change the whole current of her daily life? The only answer she could render to these questions was deeply humiliating to her womanly pride, and she had sought in solitude the strength to meet him, when avoidance was impossible without betraying the deep sense of mortification which crushed her to the earth.

She heard a quick step in the hard rattle of the shingle, and looking up saw him, whom she most wished to shun, turning the point in the cliff, and rapidly approaching her; he was already within fifty yards.

Egerton sat down on the small bench beside her.

"I have brought you your glove, Miss Campbell," he said, "I found it by the oaks, where I think you must have just left it."

"Thank you," she answered but without looking towards him, or putting out her hand to take it.

"May I keep it, Bertha?" continued Egerton in a very low voice.

She covered her face with her hands, but made no answer.

"Oh, speak! for God's sake, I implore you, speak! If you knew the agony of suspense in which I have been living for the last few weeks, if you knew how I have treasured every word from your lips, every glance from your eye, and weighed them in the balance of my own hopes and fears, nay, of my own vanity if you will, and how I have watched and prayed that I might not deceive myself in the result,—for I felt the better part of all my future being and doing, in this world at least, lay in your hands—if you knew

all this, you would tell me my fate at once. I dread to hear it, but this terrible uncertainty is agony."

Bertha pressed her hands yet more closely to her face, and still she did not speak. Deep sobs choked her voice, and her bosom heaved with the strength of the emotion that convulsed her whole frame.

"Oh, fool, weak fool that I have been! she pities me with all her heart, but she feels that she can never give me any warmer feeling. Forgive me, Miss Campbell, forgive me the pain that I have caused you. I shall leave Stonecombe to-night. Good bye, and may God bless you—we shall never meet again."

He started from the bench, and was hurrying off, when he heard a voice behind him.

"Stay, Mr. Egerton, you have mistaken my silence."

Egerton turned quickly, and read at once in those tearful eyes now raised to his, the secret that was a secret no longer. He took her hand, folded his arm around her waist, and imprinted

on her lips one long long kiss, that sweetest kiss of all—the first kiss of first love.

"Dearest, dearest Bertha," said Egerton, "I love you with my whole soul, I have loved you from the first. I have never looked on those deep eyes with any other feeling. You have made me very very happy; God bless you for it! God bless you!"

"I may tell you now," said Bertha, "that it was no coquetry that made me silent at first. I felt so happy," she continued, as the tears still streamed down her face, "I felt so very happy at this sudden change, that I could not speak at first. I thought, indeed I was sure you liked me, Henry, but I never dreamt that you had felt so much for one so far below you in all that is great, and good, and noble. Forgive me if I have ever pained you by my seeming coldness, but you know the reason now. I feared my own heart, and—and I would not give it till I knew that the gift was sought."

And Egerton kissed away her tears, and they talked of the future in a calmer tone; and

Bertha said she felt sure that her father loved Egerton, and would offer no opposition to their union.

The hours sped along too rapidly, alas! as such hours do, and the lengthened shadows of the rock, warned them that it was time to return. Egerton said that he could not sleep till he had spoken to Mr. Campbell, and determined on seeing him that very night.

"One petition, dearest," said Egerton, as they rose from the bench. "One lock of that dark hair."

"In exchange for the glove?" she answered, smiling.

"Oh, no. I must keep the glove to fold it in."

"She gave him the much-coveted lock, and they started on their way home. They paced the same sea-shore, they heard the waves break and the waters rustling through the pebbles with the same untiring repetition as when they had reached the spot three hours before. All was now the same as then, but yet how changed!

At Bertha's request, Egerton consented to leave her before they had quite reach the house, adding, however, that he should return in an hour to drink tea at the Hall, and lay his suit before her father. He had hardly proceeded fifty yards, when, on turning round to watch her retreating figure as it vanished behind the trees, he saw a servant on horseback speak to her a few hurried words, and then ride on towards him.

"Oh, sir," said the man, "I have been every where to look for you. An express has just arrived from Hebworth, and Sir Roderick wants to see you directly."

"Is my father ill?" said Egerton, hastily.

"Well, sir, I wasn't told to say nothing about that, but as you ask me, I believe Sir Roderick has had an attack of epilexy, or apolepsy, or summut of that kind."

"Give me your horse," said Egerton.

He jumped into the saddle, and rode off to the Vicarage, where the ill-tidings were confirmed by Mr. Edward Campbell. Half-an-hour after-

wards he was galloping along the road to Hebworth as fast as his horse could set feet to the ground.

"What on earth's the use of tearing along like that I should like to know," said John to himself, as he rode behind. "Why, he'll knock that bay mare's feet all to pieces on this hard road. He'll pretty well kill her, if he tries that pace long; she hasn't got it in her."

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